Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Alexander Khaleeli

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	ah
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūnus	Jonah
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Lūt	Lot	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

Foreword

This volume features ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's commentary on the entirety Sūrah Yūnus and the first section of Sūrah Hūd. The introductions to other volumes in this series have already discussed the author's intellectual biography and his approach to Qurʾanic exegesis. The present introduction will focus on the commentary on Sūrah Yūnus (leaving Sūrah Hūd for the subsequent volume) and its principle themes.

Chapter 10 (Yūnus, 'Jonah') takes its name from the Prophet Jonah, whose story is referenced in a single verse towards its end, along with the stories of Noah and Moses. At first glance, this choice of name may seem surprising for two reasons; first, because the story occupies only a single verse (by comparison, the story of Noah occupies three verses, and the story of Moses eighteen) and, secondly, because the story of Jonah is described in greater detail in Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt (37:139–148). However, in fact, the reference to Jonah plays a pivotal role in the chapter's overall message. Therefore, we will consider it in the broader context of the chapter, while considering the significance of the story of Jonah amongst other Qurʾanic narratives of earlier prophets.

Sūrah Yūnus was revealed in Mecca and, as ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī has observed that, based on interconnectedness of its verses, it was sent down in a single go. As such, it provides us with an example of how the Qurʾan draws on a range of devices to convey its message, and particularly the use of narrative.

The tone of the chapter is highly dialectical: We frequently hear the voices of the Prophet's opponents related in its verses as God recounts them, *They say...* (10:2, 15, 18, 20, 38, 48, 68) or *They inquire of you ...* (10:53), before instructing His Messenger on how to respond, with the imperative, *say...* (10:15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 31, 34, 38, 41, 49, 50, 53, 58, 59, 69), and frequently directly addressing the audience (with the plural 'you'), for example: *What is the matter with you? How do you judge?* (10:35).

Throughout this chapter, God returns time and again to the issue of the revelation of the Qurʾan and the Meccans' denial thereof. It appears as though it was revealed after the idolaters had rejected the Prophet's claim

to receive divine revelation and denounced the Qur'an as nothing more than magic. Therefore, the bulk of this discussion of this chapter revolves around threats of punishment against those of the Prophet's people who deny God's signs, and a warning that He will judge between the Prophet and between them, and that this is God's convention in dealing with His creatures, after which He concludes the chapter. This is one of the distinguishing features of the chapter, and it is in this context that the stories of Jonah, Noah, and Moses should be understood.

In verses 47–52, God sets up a universal historical paradigm of how people deny His prophets and, as a result, fall victim to His wrath: *There is a messenger for every nation; so when their messenger comes, judgment is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged* (10:47). This is the principle that is shown to operate in the stories of Noah, Moses, and Jonah later in the chapter—whose missions are set up as parallels to that of the Prophet—and it is to this principle that God ultimately returns at the end of the chapter.

The Qur'an contains numerous accounts of nations that have been punished by God, particularly the stories of other prophets such as Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, and Shuʿayb. These stories recount the unbelieving response of a particular people to one of God's prophets when he called on them to be god-fearing and righteous; their response often includes a threat of violence towards the prophet in question, who then prays for God to deliver him and his followers or household. Then, in a variety of ways, God intervenes to destroy the disbelievers. Therefore, the basic structure of these stories is that God sends a messenger; the messenger is rejected; and the unbelievers are punished.

These punishment stories are of further interest, however, because they provide some fascinating insights into the Prophet's own experience in Mecca, as they are evidently intended to console him that he is not alone amongst the divine messengers in being rejected by his own people. Therefore, paradoxically, these stories about divine punishment reflect his deep concern for the Meccan idolaters and the grief that their disbelief causes him.

The present chapter clearly intends to draw a parallel between the mission of Moses to Pharaoh and the of Prophet to his people. We see the Meccan disbelievers of the Prophet's time saying in 10:2: *'This is indeed*

a plain magician', while Pharaoh and his elite respond to Moses' call by denouncing it as: *'This is indeed plain magic!'* (10:76). Furthermore, Moses answer to Pharaoh could apply equally well to the people of Mecca: *'Do you say of the truth when it comes to you...? Is this magic? Magicians do not find salvation'* (10:77). These parallels serve to highlight both the fundamental unity and continuity of the divine message throughout history, as well as the predictability of the responses of its opponents. This establishes God's custom (*sunnah*) of dealing with mankind and reassures the faithful at the time of the Prophet that the attitude of the Quraysh is not only not unprecedented but to be expected. The further implication of this is that if the Quraysh do not alter their ways, they will suffer the same fate as Pharaoh and the people of Noah. This point is driven home by the exceptional case of Jonah, to which we will now turn.

Jonah's nation is unique amongst all the nations mentioned in the Qur'an in that they were the only people to have escaped divine punishment through repentance—in contrast to the people of Noah and Pharaoh and his elite:

> *Why has there not been any town that might believe, so that its belief might benefit it, except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in the life of this world, and We provided for them for a while* (10:90).

Jonah's people provide an example of hope and the possibility of deliverance, almost to the last minute—contrast this to the story of Pharaoh, who left his repentance too late:

> *We carried the Children of Israel across the sea, whereat Pharaoh and his troops pursued them out of defiance and aggression. When overtaken by drowning, he called out, 'I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit.' 'What! Now? When you have been disobedient heretofore and were among the agents of corruption?!* (10:90–91).

The message of this juxtaposition could not have been lost on the Prophet's audience: As long as the punishment has not yet overtaken you, there is still time to repent—It is ultimately a hopeful message, although one accompanied by a dire warning of what would follow should they fail to do so.

The story of Jonah is fleshed out in more detail in other chapters of the Qur'an, whose details raise interesting theological problems for Muslim theologians. However, the key detail that is mentioned here is the fact that his people were spared God's punishment; it is this detail that separate his story from the other two presented before it, and which provides the key to not only the significance of the three prophetic narratives, but to the chapter as a whole. Recall that the central theme of this chapter has been the rejection of the Quraysh of the Prophet and his revelation, which finds historical parallels in the stories of these three messengers. God makes this parallel explicit towards the end of the chapter:

> *Do they await anything except the like of the days of those who passed away before them? Say, 'Then wait! I too am waiting along with you.' Then We shall deliver Our apostles and those who have faith. Thus it is a must for Us to deliver the faithful* (10:102–103).

The final verses of the chapter harken back to the judgment mentioned in 10:47. Having provided three examples of His judgment of earlier nations (including the exceptional case of Jonah), God now reassures the Prophet that just as He judged between earlier prophets and their nations, so too shall he judge between the Prophet and his own when the time comes:

> *And follow that which is revealed to you, and be patient until Allah issues judgment, and He is the best of judges* (10:108–109).

Alexander Khaleeli (Translator),
June 27, 2023

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Chapter 10

Sūrah Yūnus (Jonah)

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Verses 1–10

Sūrah Yūnus, as the contents of its verses suggest, was revealed in Mecca at the beginning of the Prophet's Mission. Furthermore, based on the connection that is evident between all of its verses, this chapter was revealed in a single go. Some scholars make an exception for the section of three verses beginning with, *So if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book before you* (10:94). Others make an exception for the verse, *Some of them believe in it, and some of them do not believe in it, and your Lord best knows the agents of corruption* (10:40). They say it was revealed about the Jewish tribes of Medina, but there is no evidence in the wording of any of these verses to support such a claim.

The main purpose for which this chapter was revealed is to emphasize the doctrine of monotheism by conveying warnings and glad tidings. It appears as though it was revealed after the idolaters of Mecca had rejected the Prophet's claim to have received divine revelation and denounced the Qur'an as nothing more than magic. Hence God responds to them by expounding that the Qur'an is a heavenly book that has been sent down with His knowledge; that it contains teachings about divine unity, such as God's oneness, knowledge, and power, the fact that all creation devolves to Him, the wonders of His conventions in creation, and the fact that they will all one day return to Him with their deeds—whether good or evil—in order that He might requite them; these are all demonstrated by the signs found in His creation of the heavens and the earth; and a human being will be guided to these teachings so long as they have a sound intellect.

Therefore, the Qur'an contains lofty truths that would only be rightly found in divine speech, not in the words of false and fabricated sorcery.

This is something that can be taken from the fact that the chapter opens by mentioning the idolaters' denial of the Qur'an: *Does it seem odd to these people that We have revealed... The faithless say, 'This is indeed a plain magician'* (10:2), and that it closes with the words, *And follow that which is revealed to you...* (10:109). Throughout this chapter, God returns time and again to the issue of the revelation of the Qur'an and their denial thereof, in verses such as: *When Our manifest signs are recited to them ...* (10:15); *This Qur'an could not have been fabricated by anyone besides Allah ...* (10:37); *O mankind! There has certainly come to you an advice from your Lord* (10:57); *So if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you* (10:94).

The repetition of this topic throughout the verses of the chapter, together with its opening and closing sections, shows that it was revealed after the idolaters had denied that the Qur'an was the word of God and denied that the Prophet had received any revelation whatsoever. That is why the bulk of this discussion of this chapter revolves around threats of punishment against those of the Prophet's people who deny God's signs, and a warning that He will judge between the Prophet and between them, and that this is God's convention in dealing with His creatures, after which He concludes the chapter. Hence, this is one of the distinguishing features of the chapter, to the extent that it is known as the chapter that warns the Prophet's people that God will judge between the Prophet and them: *be patient until Allah issues judgment, and He is the best of judges* (10:109).

الر ۚ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾

(10:1) *Alif, Lam, Ra. Those are the signs* (āyāt) *of the Wise Book* (al-kitāb al-ḥakīm)

God uses the demonstrative pronoun, '*those*', which is normally used to refer to something at a distance, to signify the lofty and exalted status of the Qur'an, for it is the word of God which has descended to the earth from Him, the Highest of the High, the Exalted One, the Lord of the Throne.

As for *āyāt* (and the meaning of *āya* is 'sign'), it is possible to refer to ideas or external entities using this term. However, here it is definitely used to refer to the constituent parts of the divine speech. This is a meaning

we can observe in the verse, *Is it not a sign for them that the learned of the Children of Israel recognize it?* (26:197); the verse, *And her who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her Our spirit, and made her and her son a sign for all the nations* (21:91), and also the verse, *When We change a sign with another in its place* (16:101). This is because the divine speech is revelation that has been sent down to the Prophet, and it is also speech that is read and recited, however we interpret the meaning of revelation in this context. Therefore, in the verse under discussion, *āyāt* signifies the components of the divine speech. These are defined by the dividers that separate one verse from another on the basis of their meaning as understood by the reader. Therefore, there are sometimes disagreements amongst scholars of different schools of thought—such as the Kufan and Basran grammarians—about the precise number of verses in some chapters of the Qur'an.

The phrase, *the Wise Book* signifies a scripture in which wisdom firmly resides. Some have suggested that *ḥakīm* is actually the passive participle of the verb *ḥ-k-m* and signifies the meaning 'firm' (*muḥkam*). In this case, *al-kitāb al-ḥakīm* denotes a book that cannot be corrupted or discredited, or 'the Irrefutable Book.' In either case, the book of this status, which God describes in the following verse as a revelation from Him, is the Qur'an that was revealed to the Prophet.

Some have said that *the Wise Book* actually refers to the Guarded Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*) its 'signs' (*āyāt*) are the verses of the Qur'an that have been sent down from it and are preserved in it. This explanation is not without merit, considering other verses of the Qur'an, such as, *Rather it is a glorious Qur'an, in a preserved tablet* (85:21–22), and *This is indeed a noble Qur'an, in a guarded Book* (56:78). However, the apparent meaning of the verse under discussion and the other verses that appear with it at the beginning of the chapter that open with the disconnected letters, *Alif, Lam, Ra*, along with similar verses that are concerned with describing the Qur'an is that the meaning of *Book* and its *signs* are the Qur'an and its verses that are read and recited by human beings, which is sent down from the Guarded Tablet that is protected from falsehood and corruption. Therefore, it is like a book that is taken from another book, as we can deduce from the verses, *These are the signs of the Book and a manifest Qur'an* (15:1), and *a Book, whose signs have been made definitive and then elaborated, from One all-wise, all-aware* (11:1).

أَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ قَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسَاحِرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢﴾

(10:2) *Does it seem odd to these people that We have revealed to a man from among themselves to 'Warn mankind, and give good news to the faithful that they are in good standing with their Lord'? The faithless say, 'This is indeed a plain magician.'*

The question at the beginning of this verse is rhetorical in nature, with the force of rebuking them for being amazed that God that revealed the Qur'anic message to a man from among themselves.

'Warn mankind, and give good news to the faithful ...': This is an explanation of what God revealed to *a man from among themselves*. It shows that the revelation He sent down to him was intended as a warning to the generality of mankind and a good news specifically to the faithful among them. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Qur'an is actually a source of harm to people under some circumstances, namely under those where they persist in disbelief and disobedience, but a source of benefit to them in others, such as faith and obedience.

The 'good news' (*bushrā*) which the Prophet is commanded to deliver to the faithful is *that they are in good standing with their Lord*, and the meaning of 'good standing' (*qadam ṣidqin*) here is the abode of truthfulness described in the verse, *Indeed the Godwary will be amid gardens and streams, in the abode of truthfulness with an omnipotent King* (54:54–55). Therefore, faith which engenders nearness to God and a high spiritual rank with Him is truthfulness in faith, and one who is truthful in faith will occupy an abode of truthfulness with God.

The use of the term 'standing' (*qadam*, lit. 'foot') to refer to a station or rank is a figure of speech, as one typically occupies a space by standing in it with one's feet. Therefore, the word *qadam* came to be used to refer to the space itself when discussing material things, and one's rank or station when discussing immaterial things. The phrase 'a good standing' (*qadam ṣidqin*, lit. 'an honest foot') refers to the honesty and veracity of the one who is standing in that space, namely a standing that is attributed to the honesty of the one who holds it.

There are other explanations given for *ṣidq*, including that it refers to the personification of honesty, as if honesty had a foot of its own and dishonesty had a foot of its own, but it is the foot of honesty that is firm and does not slip.

The faithless say, 'This is indeed a plain magician': In other words, the Prophet is obviously a magician. It is also recited, 'This is indeed a plain magic' (*inna hādhā la siḥrun mubīn*), which is a reference to the Qur'an. However, in both cases, the essential meaning is the same: The disbelievers accused the Prophet of practicing magic through the words of the Qur'an.

It appears that this explains why *it* (seems) *odd to these people*, namely because when they hear what the Prophet recites to them of the Qur'an they find its speech to be very different from their own, inasmuch as it is evidently miraculous and has a profound effect on peoples' hearts and minds. Therefore, they react to this by saying, 'it is plain magic, and the one who brought it is plainly a magician!'

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ
عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۖ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۖ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ
رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(10:3) ***Indeed your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six stages, and then settled on the Throne, directing the command. There is no intercessor, except by His leave. That is Allah, your Lord! So worship Him. Will you not then take admonition?***

The previous verse described the surprise of the idolaters that revelation—meaning the Qur'an—was being sent down to the Prophet, their denial of him, and their accusing him of being a magician. In response, God begins to expound what it is they denied from two aspects: Their denial of the truth and knowledge contained in the Qur'an, and the fact that the Qur'an they reject as magic is truly a divine scripture and contains no falsehood or magic of any kind.

The phrase, *Indeed your Lord is Allah*, introduces the first of these aspects, which is the message brought to them by the Prophet of God, and that the teachings of the Qur'an are truthful and contain no doubt,

and that it is incumbent upon them to follow these teachings. In short, 'O people, your Lord is God who created all of this world that you can see, its heavens, and its earth, in six stages, then settled on the Throne of divine power, took up the reins of divine governance, to which all the affairs of His creation devolve, and began to govern the created cosmos. When He governs everything without seeking the assistance of any helper or supporter, there is nothing that can intervene in the affairs of His creation—which is the meaning of intercessions (*shafā'a*)—without His permission, for He is the First Cause above which is no other cause, and all the causes that exist beneath Him are caused by Him and are intercessors only by His leave.

And if this is the case, it is God alone who is your Lord and who governs your affairs and not those you have taken up as lords besides Him and as intercessors with Him. This is the meaning of the sentence, *That is Allah, your Lord! So worship Him. Will you not then take admonition?* In other words, have you not realized through your contemplation on the meaning of divinity, creation, and governance, that God is your Lord and that there is no Lord other than Him?

We have already discussed the meaning of the Throne (*al-'arsh*), intercession (*shafā'a*), and divine permission (*idhn*) in our explanation of the verse, *Indeed your Lord is Allah* (7:54).

إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ لِيَجْزِيَ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ
مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٤﴾

(10:4) *To Him will be the return of you all—Allah's true promise* (wa'd Allāh ḥaqqan). *Indeed He originates the creation, then He will bring it back that He may reward those who have faith and do righteous deeds with justice. As for the faithless, they shall have boiling water for drink, and a painful punishment because of what they used to defy.*

After reminding listeners of the Origin of all things, God now reminds them of their Return to Him. *Allah's true promise* means: 'God has promised this truthfully.'

Ḥaqq ('truth') denotes a statement that corresponds to reality.

Therefore, when God says that His promise of the Resurrection is true, this means that His creation is such that it will not be complete unless all things—including the human being—return to Him. This is like a stone that falls to earth from the sky: As it falls, its movement foretells that it will land on the earth, for its movement is something that will not end before it gradually approaches the earth and then comes to rest upon its surface. In the same way, things are gradually wending their way towards their Lord until they meet Him, per the verse, *O man! You are labouring toward your Lord laboriously, and you will encounter Him* (84:6). So keep this in mind.

Indeed He originates the creation, then He will bring it back that He may reward those who have faith and do righteous deeds with justice: This emphasizes the statement, *To Him will be the return of you all*, and expands on the meaning and significance of the Return to God.

It could also be read as providing a rationale for the statement, *To Him will be the return of you all*, as it contains two of the arguments found in the Qur'an to demonstrate the truthfulness of the Resurrection:

The first is, *Indeed He originates the creation, then He will bring it back*. This is because God's custom is to pour out existence on whatever He creates and provide to it His mercy in order to complete its created existence: It comes into being, it lives, and it enjoys God's mercy so long as it exists, until it reaches its appointed duration.

However, when it reaches the duration that has been appointed for it, this does not mean that it fades to nothingness and non-existence, such that God's mercy, by which its being subsisted and by which it received its life, power, knowledge, and other such qualities, has come to naught. On the contrary, God continues to hold the mercy that He granted it in His hand of omnipotence, for whatever God has poured out into His creation remains His countenance, and His countenance shall never fade away.

Therefore, when we look at the existence of things and their coming to an end, this is not the same as fading away into nothingness, as we might imagine it is. On the contrary, the end of things is their return to God's presence just as they had descended into this world from His presence. Whatever is with God is everlasting, so this process of coming into being and reaching an end is nothing other than God's expansion and contraction of being, for it is God who originates things by unfurling His mercy and returns them to Him by seizing it, which is the promised Resurrection.

... back that He may reward those who have faith and do righteous deeds with justice: This is the second proof for the resurrection, that of divine justice—which is one of the divine attributes of action. It is because of God's justice that He will not treat those who submitted to Him faithfully and did righteous deeds as equal to those who were arrogant and denied Him and His signs, even though the two groups were both equally subject to the natural order of cause and effect, which brought benefit and harm to them in this world by God's leave. Therefore, all that remains is for God to separate the two groups by His justice after they have returned to Him: He will reward the faithful who did good deeds with things that they will enjoy and punish the faithless who did evil deeds with things that cause them pain.

Therefore, this proof depends on the two groups being distinguished from one another on the basis of their faith and righteous deeds or their disbelief, and on the phrases, *with justice* and the phrase, *that He may reward*, which qualifies the statement *to Him will be the return of you all*.

It is also possible that the phrase, *that He may reward* qualifies the statement *then He will bring it back*, in which case it occurs in the context of providing a rationale for why He will bring it back. However, the proof is the same in both cases. In terms of the literal construction of the verse, the second meaning is a more likely reading.

هُوَ الَّذِى جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۚ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَٰلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝٥

(10:5) *It is He who made the sun a radiance* (ḍiyā') *and the moon a light, and ordained its phases that you might know the number of years and the calculation. Allah did not create all that except with reason. He elaborates the signs for a people who have knowledge.*

According to some scholars, the word *ḍiyā'* ('radiance') is the infinitive form of the verb *dā', yaḍū', ḍaw', ḍiyā'* in the same pattern as the verb *'ādh, ya'ūdh, 'awdh, 'iwādh* ('to seek protection'). According to others, it could also be the plural of *ḍaw'* (in which case, it would mean 'radiances'), just as *siyāṭ* is the plural of *sawṭ* ('whip'). In other words, the meaning of

this phrase is, 'And God made the sun a source of radiance and the Moon a source of light.'

The same is true of *and ordained its phases*, which means that God appointed phases for the moon to move through on its course through the heavens, occupying each night a phase different to the one it had occupied the previous night. The moon moves further from the sun each night until it reaches the far side of the earth relative to it and then begins to return. This represents the measure of complete lunar month, by which it is possible to calculate the length of each month and all the months in a year. That is why God says, *that you might know the number of years and the calculation*.

This verse calls attention to one of the proofs to demonstrate to people God's oneness in His Lordship and His being free from having any partners. Its meaning is as follows: 'He is the one who made the sun a source of radiance which you use in all areas of your lives, just as whatever creations exist on the earth make use of it. Likewise, it is He who made the moon a light that you could use, and appointed phases for it, the changing of which gives rise to the calculation of the months and the years—knowledge of which you also benefit from. And He did not create all of this with all of the myriad purposes it serves except with truth, for these are real purposes that are part of the natural order that God created. Therefore, nothing God has created is either vain, or false, or the result of chance coincidence.'

Therefore, God only created things according to this order in order to look after the affairs of your life in this world and the next, for He is your Lord to whom you belong and in whose hands are your affairs. You have no lord except Him.

He elaborates the signs for a people who have knowledge: The term '*signs*' here might refer to His elaboration of the signs of creation in the external world, or it might refer to the signs in His revealed scripture, though the former appears to be a better fit to the context of the verse.

إِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦﴾

(10:6) *Indeed in the alternation* (ikhtilāf) *of night and day, and whatever Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there*

are surely signs for a people who are Godwary.

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes:

> '*Ikhtilāf* means for two things to go in different directions to one another; so the *ikhtilāf* of night and day means that one of them goes towards light and the other towards darkness.'

It appears that this word is derived from the root meaning of *khalf* (or 'back'), and its original sense would be for one thing to turn its back towards another, then its semantic range expanded to include every sort of difference between two things. When one says he did *ikhtilāf* of something, this means 'he put it behind him.' One can say that people did *ikhtilāf* on a matter, meaning 'they disagreed on it.' One can also say that people did *ikhtilāf* to (*ilā*) something, meaning they frequented it, following one another's backs.

Therefore, the *ikhtilāf* of day and night might refer to them covering the earth one after another, which is the succession of day and night that makes up weeks, months, and years.

Alternatively, it might refer to the fact that day and night differ from one another in most parts of the inhabited earth; they are approximately equal at the time of the Spring Equinox, then the days grow longer in the northern regions with each passing day until the Summer Solstice, when the day is at its longest, after which their length shortens again until the time of the Autumn Equinox, when night and day are roughly equal again. Then the night begins to grow longer with each passing day until the Winter Solstice, when the night is at its longest, then the nights begin to shorten again until the Spring Equinox, when day and night are once again equal. This is in the northern regions. The opposite is true in the southern one; so when the days grow longer in the north, they grow shorter in the south to the same degree, and vice versa.

The first kind of *ikhtilāf* of the night and day helps organise life on earth by virtue of the fact that the day sees the sun spread its warm rays, followed by the night, in whose darkness coolness returns. It is through this alternation that winds are unfurled and people go out to seek a living and then gather in their homes to dwell and rest. God says, ... *and make your sleep for rest? And make the night a covering? And make the day for livelihood?* (78:9–11).

The second kind of *ikhtilāf* gives rise to the four seasons of the year,

through which provisions and sustenance are produced, *and ordained therein its means of sustenance in four days, alike for all the seekers* (41:10).

The Arabic terms *nahār* and *yawm* both signify 'day.' However, according to some scholars, *nahār* suggests a time of daylight, which is why *nahār* is typically used in contrast to *layl* ('night'), unlike *yawm*, which is used generally to signify 'day' in the general sense. That is why people say 'ten days' (*ʿashra ayyām*) or 'twenty days' (*ʿishrīn yawman*), but one does not say ten *nahārāt* or *ʿishrīn nahāran*, or the like thereof.

Therefore, the first verse contains a complete proof for His oneness in Lordship, as the alternation of night and day and all of God's creation in the heavens and the earth are governed by a single unified cosmic order that prevails over all existent beings in the earth and the heavens, and most especially the human world, in the best possible way. This reveals that there is a single divine lordship that rules over all things, including human beings. Therefore, there is no Lord except God, and He has no partner in His lordship.

It is possible that the verse, *indeed in the alternation of night and day …*, is intended to provide a rationale for the state, *he elaborates the signs for a people who have knowledge*, because of the use of the preposition '*indeed*.' If this is the case, the most appropriate explanation of *the alternation of night and day* is the first sense, which is their succession one after another, rather than the second sense, as this is the first meaning that comes to mind in light of the phrase, *it is He who made the sun a radiance and the moon a light, and ordained its phases*.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ
هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ ۝٧ أُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ۝٨

(10:7–8) ***Indeed those who do not expect to encounter Us and who are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it, and those who are oblivious of Our signs; it is they whose refuge shall be the Fire because of what they used to earn.***

In these verses, God now turns to expound the significance of the above call to worship God, in the phrase, *That is Allah, your Lord! So worship Him*, insofar as they reflect the outcomes of those who responded to the call and obeyed God and those who rejected the call and disobeyed Him.

God begins with the disbelievers by saying, *Indeed those who do not expect to encounter Us and who are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it, and those who are oblivious of Our signs*. Note that He describes them as possessing several qualities. First of all, He says that they do not expect to encounter Him, meaning they do not expect to return to God through the Resurrection that will take place on the Day of Judgement. We have already discussed, elsewhere, why the Resurrection is described as 'encountering God' (*liqā Allāh*). For example, see our discussion of the verse of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf about 'seeing' God on the Day of Judgement.[1] These disbelievers deny the Day of Recompense and, by extension, they deny their moral accountability and the notion of divine recompense as a whole and, therefore, the divine promise of reward and threat of punishment, and divine commands and prohibitions. The logical effect of this is to invalidate revelation, prophethood, and the idea of divine religion that flows from these.

By denying the reality of the Resurrection and the Return to God, the disbelievers restrict the existence of the human being to this worldly life, for the human being—and, indeed, all living beings—has an essential and innate desire to survive and pursue happiness in life. Therefore, if someone believes in an eternal life that encompasses both the life of this world and the next, then this is what they will strive for happiness in. By contrast, if they only believe in this limited worldly existence, then all of their innate drive for happiness will be focused on this world and they will be satisfied with it instead of seeking also the Hereafter. This is the meaning of the phrase, *and who are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it*.

From this, it becomes evident that the second quality with which God describes the disbelievers follows logically from the first one, namely that they *are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it* (wa itmaʾannū bi-hā), and explains what this means. The preposition '*bi*' in *wa itmaʾannū bi-hā* signifies causality here, meaning they are satisfied because of it and, therefore, do not hope to encounter God.

... and those who are oblivious of Our signs: This provides an explanation of the previous two qualities God has assigned to the disbelievers, as forgetting the hereafter and focusing on this world is a natural corollary

1 See *al-Mīzān*, Eng. v. 16, p. 71 (Ed.)

of being heedless of God's signs.

The verse under discussion is similar in meaning to the verse, *so avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of the world. That is the ultimate reach of their knowledge. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way* (53:30). Note that this verse identifies turning away from the remembrance of God— which means to be heedless of His signs—as a cause of a person's knowledge being restricted to the life of this world. Such a person wants nothing but the life of this world, which means to stray from the path of God, and straying from the path of God means forgetting the Day of Judgement, as per the verse, *Indeed those who stray from the way of Allah—there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning* (38:26).

Therefore, it is evident that denying the encounter with God and forgetting the Day of Reckoning means that a person will be pleased by the life of this world and satisfied with it rather than with the Hereafter. Therefore, his knowledge of reality will be limited to this world, and he will not seek anything beyond it. Because the criterion is the remembrance of God and seeking the Hereafter, there is no difference between a person who actively denies the Resurrection and the encounter with God and is pleased with the life of this world in belief and practice, and someone who effectively denies them and is pleased with this world in practice only.

It is also evident that belief in the Resurrection is one of the fundamental doctrines of the faith as, without it, there are no divine commands or prohibitions, no promise of reward or threat of punishment, and no prophethood or revelation. Therefore, without belief in the Resurrection, the entire edifice of the religion will crumble.

... it is they whose refuge shall be the Fire because of what they used to earn: This explains that they will be punished eternally in Hellfire because of the deeds they earned while they were in this world.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ ۖ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٩﴾

(10:9) *Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds, their Lord guides them by the means of their faith. Streams will run beneath them in gardens of bliss.*

Now God turns to the fate of the faithful and how He will reward them for responding to His call and obeying His commands.

First of all, He says that He will guide them through their faith. By this, He means that He will guide them to their Lord, as the context in which this verse occurs is a discussion of those who expect to encounter God. God has said elsewhere, *Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides to Himself those who turn penitently* (13:27). Faith only guides the faithful by God's leave to God Himself, and whenever the faithful are guided to the truth or to the straight path or to something else mentioned in the Qur'an, these are only routes and steps on the path that ultimately leads to Him, for ... *the terminus is toward your Lord* (53:42).

Here, God describes the faithful with the qualities of having faith (*īmān*) and doing righteous deeds (*aʿmāl sāliḥa*), then attributes their being guided to Him to faith alone, for faith is what elevates God's servant to the station of divine proximity. Righteous deeds play no role besides supporting faith and putting it into practice. See the verse in which God says, *Allah will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge in rank* (58:11). This verse shows that faith and knowledge play a role in elevating the human being, but it does not say anything about righteous deeds. This idea comes across even more clearly in the verse, *To Him ascends the good word, and He elevates righteous conduct* (35:10).

This concerns the guidance, which is the function of faith alone. As for the blessings of paradise, righteous conduct does play a role in earning these, just as sinful conduct plays a role in deserving punishment. God says concerning the fate of the faithful, *streams will run beneath them in gardens of bliss* (10:9). This is in contrast to what He says concerning the fate of the faithless, *it is they whose refuge shall be the Fire because of what they used to earn* (10:8).

A contemplative reader will note that God mentions that those who are guided by their faith shall dwell in the abode of nearness to God in the gardens of paradise, and one of these blessings are the streams that flow beneath them and in them. We have already explained in our commentary on the verses, *the path of those whom You have blessed* (1:7) and *they are with those whom Allah has blessed* (4:69), that the blessings mentioned in the Qur'an are symbolic of God's guardianship (*wilāya*), and God has singled out His allies (*awliyāʾ*) who enjoy proximity to Him to receive the wine of

paradise, and that this wine shows His special concern for them: *Indeed the pious will drink from a cup seasoned with Kafur, a spring where the servants of Allah drink, which they make to gush forth as they please* (76:6), and also, *Indeed the pious shall be amid bliss … as they are served with a sealed wine … a spring where those brought near drink* (83:22–28). Let such a reader ponder on these verses and apply their meanings to one another, so that some of the subtle secrets of God's speech will become apparent to them.

دَعْوَاهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ ۚ وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

(10:10) *Their call therein will be, 'O Allah! Immaculate are You!' and their greeting therein will be, 'Peace!' and their concluding call, 'All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'*

The first thing that God will do to ennoble His friends (*awliyā'*)—and they are those who have nothing in their hearts except God and none to whom they entrust their affairs save Him—is that He will purify their hearts from the love of anyone other than Him. They will not love anyone except God, so they will not become attached to anything except God or for the sake of God. They will divest Him of any partner that could pull their hearts away from His Remembrance or any distraction that could divert their attention from their Lord.

When they say, 'Immaculate are You!' (*subḥānaka*), this is to declare their Lord above anything that does not befit His holiness, such as a partner, whether in name or in thought, or any deficiency or non-existence. They glorify God not only in word, but in both word and deed, in speech and in body, and anything less than this is contaminated by a kind of polytheism. God says, *And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him* (12:106).

These are the ones whose hearts God has purified from the impurity of love for anyone besides Him which would distract them from His remembrance. He has filled them instead with His love, so that they do not want anything other than Him, for He is the good that is utterly without evil, *Allah* is better (*Allahu khayrun*, 20:73). Therefore, their hearts, which are filled with goodness and peace, will not turn towards anyone else except with goodness and peace. That is, unless those to whom they turn their

hearts are those who turn goodness and peace into evil and malediction, just as the Qur'an is a healing for those who seek to be healed by it but does not increase the wrongdoers except in their state of loss.

These pure hearts will not turn towards anything without finding God's blessings in it and witnessing it as a manifestation of His attributes of beauty and aspects of perfection, and bespeaking His grandeur and tremendousness. Therefore, whenever they describe a thing, they see it as a blessing from God and they witness in it God's beauty in His names and attributes. They do not forget or neglect their Lord in any part of their description thereof. Therefore, when they describe a thing, they are also attributing beauty to God in His actions and attributes and praising and magnifying Him for it. For praise is nothing other than lauding someone for the actions they have chosen to do.

This is the condition of God's friends—those who dwell in the abode of good deeds and strive today for their tomorrow. When they meet their Lord, He will fulfil His promise to them, admit them to His mercy, lodge them in the abode of His generosity, and complete for them their light, a blessing with which they had been singled out with in this world. God says, *Their light will move swiftly before them and on their right. They will say, 'Our Lord! Perfect our light for us...!'* (66:8).

He will quench their thirst with a rarefied drink that will purify their hearts from every kind of idolatry, whether manifest or hidden. He will envelop them in the light of knowledge and certitude, and, from their hearts, He will set flowing springs of divine unity that will flow out upon their tongues. First, they will glorify God and declare His transcendence; they will send peace upon their comrades from among the prophets, the truthful, the witnesses, and the righteous; then they will praise God and laud Him with the most eloquent praise and most brilliant acclaim.

It is perhaps to this reality that the verses refer: *Streams will run beneath them in gardens of bliss*—which is a description of the paradise of God's guardianship (*jannat al-wilāya*) and His purification of their hearts; *their call therein will be, 'O Allah! Immaculate are You!'*—which is a description of their glorifying Him and declaring Him transcendent above every deficiency, need, or partner, and this glorification is one done in His presence, for they are not veiled from their Lord; *And their greeting therein will be, 'Peace!'*—This describes Paradise as enjoying absolute security, such that

security cannot be said to be found elsewhere except in a limited, relative sense; *and their concluding call, 'All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds'*—This recounts their praise of God through His beautiful names and attributes after glorifying Him and declaring Him transcendent. This is the utmost level of the inhabitants of paradise, which they reach through the perfection of their knowledge of God.

We have already discussed, in our commentary on the verse, *All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds* (1:2), that praise is a form of description, and that none of His creatures can adequately describe God Almighty except those of His servants who have devoted themselves to His worship, who had devoted their hearts to Him, and whom He has singled out for the honor of being brought near to Him without any intermediary between them and their Lord. This is the meaning of the verse, *Clear is Allah of whatever they say, except Allah's exclusive servants* (37:159–160).

This is why, when we study the Qur'an, we find that it does not relate any praise of God save from His most noble prophets, such as Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, and Muḥammad. For example, in one verse we read that God spoke to Noah, *So We revealed to him: ... say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, who has delivered us from the wrongdoing lot'* (23:28). Another verse quotes Abraham as saying, *All praise belongs to Allah, who, despite my old age, gave me Ishmael and Isaac. Indeed my Lord hears all supplications* (14:39). Another bids the Prophet, *say, 'All praise belongs to Allah ...'* (27:93), while still another quotes David and Solomon, *they said, 'All praise belongs to Allah ...'* (27:15).

God also relates the praise of the inhabitants of Paradise in a number of places in the Qur'an. For example: *They will say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, who guided us to this ...'* (7:43); *They will say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, who has removed all grief from us ...'* (35:34); *They will say, 'All praise belongs to Allah, who has fulfilled His promise to us ...'* (39:74);

And at the end of the verse under discussion, He says, *and their concluding call, 'All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'*

This verse shows that God will join those believers in the Hereafter amongst the inhabitants of paradise with His devoted servants. Therefore, it contains a promise of beautiful divine reward, and wondrous glad tidings for the faithful.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from the narrators he mentioned, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, about the verse, *and give good news to the faithful that they are in good standing with their Lord* (10:2): 'It is divine allyship (*wilāya*).'

(2) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Yamānī, from narrators he mentioned, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, about the verse, *and give good news to the faithful that they are in good standing with their Lord*: 'It is the Messenger of God.'

Author's comment: ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī narrates this in his *Tafsīr*, with a complete chain of narrators, and al-ʿAyyāshī narrates it with an incomplete one, from Ibrāhīm ʿUmar, from narrators he mentioned, from the Imām. It appears that this is a reference to the Prophet's intercession (*shafāʿa*).

This is also the import of what al-Ṭabrisī narrates in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, when he says: 'Some have said that the *good standing* mentioned in this verse is the intercession of Muḥammad... it is narrated from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (al-Ṣādiq).'

And also of what is narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, from Ibn Mardawayh, from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, about the verse, *they are in good standing with their Lord*: 'Muḥammad will be their intercessor on the Day of Resurrection.'

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Zayd al-Shaḥḥām from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'I asked him about the glorification of God (*tasbīḥ*): "It is one of the names of God and the call of the Inhabitants of Paradise."'

Author's comment: The meaning of *tasbīḥ* here is their saying, *'O Allah! Immaculate are You!'* when the tradition says that it is one of His names, it means that it signifies His utter transcendence.

(4) In *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, it is narrated via a chain of narrators from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, from his father, from his grandfather, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, from the Prophet, who said, in a lengthy discussion with a Jew who had asked him some questions:
'When God's servant says, "O *Allah*! Immaculate are you!" (*subḥān Allāh*), everything beneath the Throne glorifies God with Him, and the one who spoke these words will be given the

> reward of ten of its like. When he says, "Praise belongs to God!" (*al-ḥamdu lillāh*), God will bless him with the bounties of this world until He bestows upon him the bounties of the Hereafter. This is the watchword of the inhabitants of paradise, which they will utter as they enter it. Every kind of speech uttered in this world is cut off save for the praise of God. That is the meaning of the verse, *The day they encounter Him, their greeting will be, 'Peace'* (33:44).

Author's comment: When he says, "Every kind of speech uttered in this world is cut off save for the praise of God," this means that whatever words are spoken in this world for purposes that serve their speaker—such as the words used in daily living, like all human discussions, or words that are spoken in acts of worship for the sake of divine reward, and the like thereof—will all terminate with the end of the world, for none of these worldly aims persist after this. Instead, all that will remain is the beautiful praise and magnification of God, which is the speech of the inhabitants of Paradise.

And when he says, 'That is the meaning of the verse, *The day they encounter Him, their greeting will be, "Peace"*', this means that their greeting on that day will be absolute peace, which shows that everything that exists there will, without exception, be in full agreement and harmony with what the human being desires. Everything that he wants, he shall have. Therefore, there is no need to use speech there in order to achieve any purpose for the speaker, as is the case with the speech of this world, so all that will remain is praise for the beauty and magnificence of God Almighty that people will witness, so ponder on this!

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Verses 11–14

In the previous section, God mentioned two of the fundamental teachings of the true religion—namely monotheism (*tawḥīd*) and resurrection (*maʿād*)—and proved their correctness through arguments founded on the human being's innate reason. After this, He foretold what would be the outcome of believing or disbelieving in these two teachings. In this section, he addresses the question of why God gives human beings respite rather than hastening to send down punishment upon them. This, in spite of their obstinacy and persistence in error and misguidance, and their bewilderment in rebellion. It also addresses the question of why this is the case and explains that the matter is clear and unambiguous; God's messengers have made it plain to them with manifest proofs, but Satan has made their deeds seem decorous to them and, in doing so, caused them to neglect the remembrance of the Hereafter. Therefore, after being reminded, they ignored it and forgot again. However, God still did not hasten to punish them, but rather granted them respite in this world for a time in order to try them and test them, for this world is an abode of trial and tribulation.

وَلَوْ يُعَجِّلُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتِعْجَالَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرِ لَقُضِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَجَلُهُمْ ۖ
فَنَذَرُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(10:11) ***Were Allah to hasten*** (yuʿajjil) ***ill for mankind with their haste*** (istiʿjāl) ***for good, their term would have been over. But We leave those who do not expect to encounter Us bewildered in their rebellion*** (fī ṭughyānihim yaʿmahūn).

The verb *taʿjīl* ('to hasten', from whence is derived *yuʿajjil*) means to bring something about quickly, while *ʿajala* and *istiʿjāl* ('haste') mean to demand something be done with speed. *Yaʿmahūn* ('bewildered') signifies intense confusion.

The meaning of the verse is: 'Were God to hasten to do harm to people—by punishing them—with the same alacrity with which they pursue good for themselves, such as blessings, He would have surely sent down

His punishment and brought them to an end. But God does not hasten to do harm to these deniers of the resurrection who reject the mantle of faith and stray, utterly bewildered in their rebellion.'

In addressing this issue, we can say that humans, by nature, are often impatient beings who tend to rush through tasks or situations that involve their benefit or welfare. In other words, they seek the most expeditious means to achieve the results they desire. Since the ultimate cause of everything lies in the hands of the Almighty God, humans, in reality, demand this haste from Him. Consequently, this human desire is a baseless habit that is rooted in their own selfish inclinations. It is crucial to understand that the factors at work in this world do not cater to the whims and desires of humans; rather, it is humans who are subject to the prevailing system that governs the cosmos. They are compelled and obliged to adhere to that system, whether they like it or not, and regardless of their feelings towards it.

If the divine process in the creation of things and the emergence of causes went in accordance with human habits, with ignorance as their foundation and hastily pursuing effects and causes, then the devastation of annihilation through divine punishment would befall humans swiftly. The root of this catastrophe and destruction lies within humanity itself, in their disbelief, their denial of the afterlife and the encounter with God, and their rebellion in their earthly existence. However, the Almighty God does not hasten to inflict calamity on humans in the same way as humans rush to obtain benefit, because His process is grounded in wisdom, unlike human habits, which are based on ignorance. As a result, the Almighty God leaves the defiant disbelievers to wallow in their own confusion.

From this, the following is evident:

First, when God says *their term would have been over* (la-quḍiya ilayhim ajaluhum), this contains a kind of guarantee. This is because the word *la-quḍiya* means something akin to 'sending down' or 'conveying', which is why it takes the preposition *ilā*. This means that God would have specified a point at which they would meet their end, or He would have sent down their end upon them. This is an allusion to the sending down of divine punishment. Therefore, this is a compound allusion.

Second, when God says, *But We leave those who do not expect to encounter Us …*, this contains a shift from God speaking about Himself in the third

person to God speaking directly in the first person to another. Perhaps this shift is intended to highlight the intermediary role of cause and effect in this, as the actions of God described in this verse and subsequent ones, such as leaving them in their bewilderment, removing their distress, or annihilating them all take place through the mediation of causes and effects. And when kings wish to indicate that their subordinates or servants were involved in some of their affairs, they say that 'we did this' or 'we did that.'

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ كَأَنْ لَمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَىٰ ضُرٍّ مَسَّهُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

(10:12) ***When distress befalls man*** **(idhā massa al-insān al-ḍurr),** ***he supplicates Us on his side, sitting, or standing; but when We remove his distress, he passes on as if he had never supplicated Us concerning the distress that had befallen him. To the profligate is thus presented as decorous what they have been doing.***

The word *ḍurr* ('distress') refers to harm that comes to a human being's person; *he supplicates Us on his side, sitting, or standing* means that he supplicates God while lying down. It appears that these three states are mentioned to signify generality, meaning 'he supplicates us in whatever condition you can imagine him being in, whether lying down, sitting, or standing, and he continues to supplicate Us in all states, never forgetting for an instance.'

It is also possible that *on his side, sitting, or standing* denote the three conditions of 'man' (from the phrase *when distress befalls man*), rather than the person invoking God in His supplications. This would render the meaning: 'When distress befalls man, while he is on his side, sitting, or standing, He supplicates us in that condition.' This is the meaning found in some traditions with incomplete chains of narration that say: *He supplicates Us on his side* means someone who is either ill or injured and unable to sit, *sitting* denotes someone who cannot stand, *or standing* denotes someone who is healthy.

... he passes on as if he had never supplicated Us concerning the distress that had befallen him: This alludes to their neglecting and forgetting that

which cannot be forgotten.

The meaning of the verse can be understood as follows: 'When a calamity or distressing hardship befalls a person, an individual consistently and unceasingly calls upon Us for relief from their suffering and persists in their supplications. However, as soon as we alleviate their affliction, they completely forget Us, and their hearts return to the same pursuits they had indulged in previously. Indeed, the deeds of those who extravagantly and excessively enjoy worldly adornments seem so alluring to them that they entirely overlook the aspect of divine lordship.

This verse explains why those who deny the resurrection persist in their misguidance and ignorance, along with the traits that contribute to this. It is as though these individuals resemble someone who, when faced with a severe hardship, remembers his Lord and repeatedly calls on Him to alleviate their affliction. They persist in this until God alleviates the affliction for which they were beseeching Him only to return to pursuing the same transgressions they had before, forgetting the reason they fervently called upon God.

Furthermore, the reason these immoderate people deny the Resurrection is that Satan has made their sinful deeds seem alluring to them. As a result, their hearts are captivated by these deeds, leaving no space for the remembrance of God. Consequently, they forget God in their heedlessness, and even though God Almighty has sent previous messengers with clear miracles to remind them of His sovereignty and to draw their attention to the fact that earlier communities were destroyed due to their disbelief and oppression, they still refuse to believe. This is the divine custom in which God punishes wrongdoers in this manner.

This shows that the following verse, *Certainly We destroyed generations before you* (10:13) is an addendum to the exposition contained in this verse.

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا ۙ وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

(10:13) *Certainly We destroyed generations before you when they perpetrated wrongs: their messengers brought them manifest proofs, but they would not have faith. Thus do We requite the guilty lot.*

The meaning of this verse is clear based on what has come before. Note the shift in address in this verse, when God says '*before you*', from speaking in the third person ('them') to speaking in the second-person ('you'). This shift emphasizes the warning it contains, as a warning is most powerful and effective when it is conveyed directly to the person being warned.

Thus do We requite the guilty lot: This is yet another shift in address, which is now directed to the Prophet. The point here is that God is explaining the divine custom with regards to punishing the guilty, and the Prophet is the person best placed to understand this and to convince others of its truth, and if he manages to convince them of its truth, they will believe in it and not deny it. This is in contrast to the previous verse, which is an account of the past and, therefore, it is irrelevant whether or not they believe it.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ﴿١٤﴾

(10:14) *Then We made you successors on the earth after them that We may observe how you will act.*

The meaning of this verse should be clear to the reader. It shows that the divine custom of putting people through trials and tests is continuous and ubiquitous throughout history.

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Verses 15–25

These are arguments with which God furnishes His Prophet to respond to what the disbelievers say about the Qur'an or about their own gods or the impertinent demands they make for a sign to be sent down.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ ۙ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا ائْتِ بِقُرْآنٍ
غَيْرِ هَٰذَا أَوْ بَدِّلْهُ ۚ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي ۖ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ
إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾

(10:15) *When Our manifest signs are recited to them, those who do not expect to encounter Us say, 'Bring a Qur'an other than this, or alter it.' Say, 'I may not alter it of my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me. Indeed should I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a tremendous day.'*

The people mentioned in this verse were idolaters who revered and worshipped idols. Their customs included engaging in oppression, committing sins, and partaking in misdeeds. The Qur'an prohibits all such actions and invites people instead to embrace the oneness of God Almighty, to renounce polytheism, and to worship God alone while purifying oneself from injustice, corruption, and the pursuit of base desires.

It is obvious that, when the verses of a book containing such teachings are recited to a group of people possessing these characteristics, these will not align with their desires and selfish whims. This is because the message of the Qur'an contradicts their personal inclinations. So, when they respond to the recitation of the Qur'an by saying, '*Bring a Qur'an other than this*,' this shows they want a Qur'an that does not contain the teachings of this Qur'an: They desire a Qur'an that does not condemn polytheism or bid them to be wary of indecencies and wrongdoing. And when they say, '*or alter it*', it means they want the verses that conflict with their beliefs and opinions to be changed so that they become acceptable to them. This is very much akin to the audience of a poet or storyteller who, disliking their poem or story, ask for a different poem or story to be recited instead, or at

least for the reciter to express it in a manner that is more pleasing to their own tastes or in better agreement with their sentiments. Thus, in the present verse, the people making these statements are treating the Qur'an as equal to the lowest and most trivial sort of discourse: As though it were speech meant solely for entertainment, so that, if the listeners are displeased with the content, they can demand that it be changed or replaced with something else altogether.

Through this, it becomes clear that when they say, *Bring a Qur'an other than this*, they mean they want a Qur'an that doesn't contain the teachings found in the actual Qur'an, which tells them to desist from one thing and to do another instead. And, when they say, *or alter it*, they want the teachings that are not to their liking to have their meanings changed in accordance with their whims while still keeping its original form. This is the difference between the demands 'to bring another' and 'to alter.'

Now, some commentators have said that the difference between the two demands is that to bring another Qur'an means to bring something new along with the existing Qur'an, while the second means to remove the existing one. However, this is incorrect, because the idolaters certainly did not want the Prophet to bring them this Qur'an and another one at the same time.

Also incorrect is the view of some commentators that when they said, '*Bring a Qur'an other than this, or alter it*', their intention was to test the Prophet by tempting him to comply. They believed that if he responded to their request, it would contradict his claim that the Qur'an was the word of God. This is because when they heard the verses of the Qur'an recited by the Prophet and his challenge to produce something similar, they were unable to do so. They harbored doubts about whether the Qur'an was indeed the word of God, or if it was the product of the Prophet himself, who they did not consider to be superior in eloquence, rhetoric, or knowledge. In fact, they viewed him as inferior to their most distinguished orators and skilled speakers.

They wanted to test the Prophet with this request, thinking that if he provided what they asked for, it would undermine the foundation of his claim that the Qur'an was the word of God. At most, they believed that the Prophet had an exceptional ability to express himself in this unique form of communication, owing to a hidden psychological strength that

they could not comprehend, similar to the mysterious causes of magic, and not due to divine inspiration.

Moreover, in addition to the contradiction between the beginning and the end of their argument, there is another issue: the Prophet's response was driven by what God Almighty had taught him as proof. Responding seriously and with solid evidence to a question posed solely for the purpose of testing and examination, without any genuine basis, is seemingly unnecessary and redundant.

Note that in the verse, *When Our manifest signs are recited to them...*, there is a shift in address from speaking directly to the audience ('you') to speaking about them in the third person ('them'). It appears that the point of this is to serve as a prelude to commanding the Prophet to say, *'I may not alter it of my own accord...'* for this requires God to turn aside from addressing them and to address the Prophet instead.

Say, 'I may not alter it of my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me. Indeed should I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a tremendous day': In response to their demand when they said, '*Bring a Qur'an other than this, or alter it*,' God Almighty, during His discourse, used the term 'clear proofs' (*āyāt bayyināt*). When the verses are clear proofs that are self-evidently from God Almighty, they unequivocally reveal what God wills, including the rejection of idols and avoidance of everything displeasing to Him, as revealed in the teaching of the religion sent down to His Messenger. Their question is thrown back to them, as the Prophet is inspired to present the argument by saying, beginning with, '*I may not alter it...*', until the end of the three verses.

The statement *Say, 'I may not alter it of my own accord ...'*, is the response to their demand, '*or alter it*.' It means: 'Say, "I have no authority – and it is not my right – to change it on my own accord because it is not my speech, but rather divine revelation. My Lord has commanded me to follow it and not to follow anything else. I do not disobey my Lord's command because I fear that, if I disobey Him, I will face the punishment of a tremendous Day"', which is the Day of the Encounter with Him.'

The statement, *Say, 'I may not alter it of my own accord ...'* negates the Prophet's right to change it and denies that he has any choice in the matter. The statement, '*I follow only what is revealed to me*,' provides a rationale as to why, '*I may not alter it*.' The statement, '*Indeed should I disobey my*

Lord, I fear ...', provides a rationale as to why, '*I follow only ...*,' implying that divine command is connected to it.

The statement, '*Indeed should I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a tremendous day*', there is an allusion to what was mentioned at the beginning of this passage, namely, , *those who do not expect to encounter Us say, 'Bring a Qur'an other than this, or alter it.'* The cause for them to utter these words is their denial of the afterlife and fact that they do not expect to meet God. In response, the Prophet, following the command of his Lord, says, '*Indeed should I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a tremendous day*.' Through this statement, the meaning shifts to the fact that they ask their question because they do not expect to meet God. However, the Prophet has no doubt in this, and he cannot accede to their demands because he—unlike them—fears the punishment of the Day of the Encounter with God, which is a tremendous Day.

By substituting the Day of the Encounter mentioned at the beginning of the verse with the tremendous Day mentioned here at its end, God sends an additional warning to the disbelievers, as the idea of punishment does not accord with that of encountering God (*liqā'*) but it does accord with that of a tremendous day.

قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ ۖ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

(10:16) ***Say, 'Had Allah wished, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have appraised you of it*** (wa lā adrā-kum bihi)***, for I have dwelled among you for a lifetime*** ('umur) ***before it. Do you not apply reason?'***

Adrā-kum bihi ('appraised you of it') means 'made it known to you.'

'Umur means one's life, and can be written as *'umur* or *'amr*, but when it is used in an oath, such as 'by my life' or 'by your life' (*li-'amrī* or *li-'amrik*), it is always written as *'amr*.

This verse addresses the first part of their question, which is their statement, '*Bring a Qur'an other than this*.' The meaning, as supported by the context, is that the matter is subject to God's will, not my own, for I am only a messenger. If God had willed to reveal a different Qur'an and not this one, I would not have recited it to you nor acquainted you with it. I lived

among you for a lifetime before the Qur'an was revealed, interacted with you, and you interacted with me. You found that I had no knowledge of the Qur'anic revelation. If it were up to me and within my power, I would have initiated it earlier, and its signs and indications would have appeared. I have no control over this matter; it is subject to God's will, and His will is attached to this Qur'an and not another. Do you not understand this?

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

(10:17) *So who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah, or denies His signs? Indeed the guilty will not be felicitous.*

This is a rhetorical question intended as a rebuke. In other words, there is no greater wrongdoer or sinner than these two types of people: The one who invents a lie about God and the one who denies His signs. This is because the severity of the wrongdoing depends on the importance of the one who has been wronged. Therefore, if the wrong is done to God, this is the greatest wrong of all.

The context of the argument in the two verses suggests that this verse is a continuation of the previous one, and the meaning is: I will not grant your demand to bring a Qur'an other than this or to change it, as I have no authority or right over this matter. If I were to answer your proposal, I would be the most unjust and sinful of people, and the wrongdoers will not succeed. If I were to change the Qur'an and alter some parts that you do not accept, I would be fabricating lies about God, and there is no greater injustice than that. If I were to abandon this Qur'an and bring you another that you would accept, I would be denying God's verses, and there is also no greater injustice than that.

It is also possible that the rhetorical question in both parts is directed towards the polytheists, meaning that you are the most unjust of people by associating partners with God, which is fabricating lies about Him, and by denying my prophethood and the verses revealed to me, which is denying God's verses, and the wrongdoers will not succeed.

Some have argued that the first part of the rhetorical question is addressed to the Prophet, assuming he agrees to their demands, and the

second part is addressed to the polytheists. In other words, no one is more unjust in the sight of God than these two groups: those who fabricate lies about God and those who deny His verses. I am warning you against the latter, so how can I accept the former for myself when it is even worse than the latter? What benefit would there be for me from this great crime when I seek to reform?

While this reading is not problematic in itself, the issue lies in deriving it from the verse and the deriving this meaning from the wording of the verse. Similarly, the previous explanation is also more appropriate to the context of the verse.

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَٰؤُلَاءِ شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ قُلْ أَتُنَبِّئُونَ اللَّهَ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

(10:18) *They worship besides Allah that which* (mā) *neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit, and they say, 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say, 'Will you inform Allah about something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?' Immaculate is He and exalted above any partners that they ascribe!*

This discourse is directed towards the idol worshippers from amongst the polytheists, although it may also include others, such as the People of the Book, depending on the how broadly we consider its meaning. This is both due to the use of the pronoun *mā* and the fact that the chapter is Meccan, from the earliest of the Qur'anic revelations to the Prophet.

The idol worshippers used to worship idols in order to draw closer to the lords of those idols represented through their worship, and through these lords to their Lord, the Lord of Lords, who is God, the Exalted. They would say, 'Given our material human impurities and the filth of sins and transgressions, there is no way for us to reach the Lord of Lords because of the utter purity and sanctity of His domain, and there is no connection between us and Him. Therefore, it is necessary for us to draw closer to Him through His most beloved creations, who are the lords of the idols, to whom God has delegated the management of His creation.

We draw closer to them through their idols and forms, and we worship the idols so that they can intercede for us with God, bringing us good and warding off evil.' Thus, the worship of the idols becomes real, and the act of intercession is attributed to the lords of the idols and sometimes to the idols themselves.

Instead of saying that the polytheists worship idols, the verse says, that they worship *that which neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit* to allude to the key error of their claims. In other words, it shows that their efforts would only have been successful if these idols could actually harm or benefit in any way and if they had the ability to sense the worship and devotion, becoming satisfied with the worship of their devotees so that they or their lords would intercede for them with God, provided that God would accept their intercession. However, these idols are lifeless objects that cannot sense anything, nor can they cause harm or bring benefit.

God commands His Prophet to refute their false claim of intercession—in addition to what is hinted at in the phrase, *that which neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit*—by saying, *'Will you inform Allah about something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?'* The implication is that God, the Exalted, has no knowledge of the existence of these intercessors in any part of the heavens and the earth, so your claim is, in fact, informing Him of something He does not know. This is one of the ugliest and most arrogant fabrications. How can there be anything in existence that God does not know when He knows all that is in the heavens and the earth?

The question, therefore, is rhetorical with the force of a negation. By denying God's knowledge of the existence of these intercessors, it implies the denial of their existence altogether. Perhaps this expression was chosen because intercession is dependent upon the knowledge of its existence. Intercession can only be realized if the one being interceded with has knowledge of the existence of the intercessor and their intercession. Therefore, if it is assumed that God does not know about the intercessors, how can their intercession be effective when He has no knowledge of it?

Immaculate is He and exalted above any partners that they ascribe!: This is a phrase of exaltation. The statement is from God's speech and not part of what He has commanded His Prophet to say. The evidence for

this is that the phrase speaks about the idolaters in the third person rather than addressing them directly, as if this speech was part of the speech of the Prophet, it would read instead: '...above any partners that you ascribe!'

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوا ۚ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

(10:19) *Mankind were but a single community; then they differed. And were it not for a prior word of your Lord, decision would have been made between them concerning that about which they differ.*

We have already discussed in this in our commentary on the verse, *Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves* (2:213). There, we saw that there were two kinds of difference between humankind.

The first variety is difference in terms of worldly affairs, which is related to claims and divides people into claimants, defendants, oppressors, oppressed, aggressors, and victims. This is the kind of difference that God has removed by establishing the religion, sending prophets, and revealing the Book with them to judge between people in their disputes, teach them the tenets of religion, and direct warnings and glad tidings towards them.

The second variety is difference within the religion itself and what the divine book contains of true knowledge in terms of the roots and branches of faith. The Qur'an explicitly states in various verses that this type of difference ultimately leads to scholars of the Book to dispute among themselves out of envy. This is not a matter dictated by human nature like the first variety of difference. Consequently, the path splits into two forks: the path of guidance and the path of misguidance. God has guided those who believe to the truth of that about which they differ. In various instances of His speech, after mentioning this type of difference, God has stated that if it were not for a prior decree from God, He would have judged between them concerning that upon which they disagreed, but He grants them leave until an appointed time. He says, *They did not divide except after the*

knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and were it not for a prior decree of your Lord until a specified time, decision would have been made between them (42:14).

Now, the previous verse, *they worship besides Allah that which neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit*, is only suitable for the second type of difference mentioned, which is the difference within the religion itself. This is because it mentions people following the path of misguidance by worshipping things that neither harm nor benefit them and taking them up as intercessors with God. The implication is that the intended meaning of people previously being a single nation is that they were following a single religion, the religion of monotheism, and then they differed, dividing into two groups: monotheists and polytheists.

God mentions in the verse that their disagreement would require Him to judge between them by making the truth prevail over falsehood, which includes the destruction of the falsifiers and the salvation of the truthful ones. However, a prior divine word restrained Him from passing judgment between them. This word refers to God's saying when He sent down humankind to Earth: *On the earth shall be your abode and sustenance for a time* (2:36).

Commentators on the Qur'an have given strange readings about this verse, such as: The word '*people*' in this verse refers to the Arabs, who were following a single, true religion, which was the religion of Abraham until the time of 'Amr b. Luḥayy, who introduced idolatry to them. Consequently, they became divided into the monotheists who submitted to the one true God and polytheistic idol worshippers. However, it should be evident that there is no linguistic evidence in the verse to support this opinion.

Another opinion is that the intended meaning of '*people*' is all of humanity, and the intended meaning of them being a single nation is that they were following their innate nature of submission to God (*fiṭrat al-Islām*), even if there were always differences between them. The word 'were' (*kāna*) in 'were a single community' (*kāna ummatan wāḥidatan*) is not time-bound. Therefore, the verse reflects both the natural state of people, which is monotheism, and their actual state, which is disagreement. People, by their innate nature, are nothing but a single nation of monotheists, but they have disagreed amongst themselves against their own nature.

However, this reading contradicts the apparent meaning of the verse, as well as the verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah, as well as the apparent meaning of other verses, such as His sayings: *They did not divide except after the knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves* (42:14); *... and those who were given the Book did not differ except after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves* (3:19);

Furthermore, one cannot argue that human beings are in a perpetual state of disagreement while simultaneously asserting that this is not part of their innate nature.

Others have argued that the intended meaning is that all people were initially following a single path of disbelief (*kufr*) and polytheism (*shirk*), and then they disagreed, resulting in Muslims and disbelievers.

This is perhaps the most absurd of all the opinions proposed about the verse. Not only is it a claim without any evidence, it is also rejected by the apparent meaning of the verses. The verses clearly state that the appearance of disagreement is due to people's jealousy and animosity after they had received knowledge, which led to the subsequent emergence of disbelief and polytheism. Now, this jealousy and animosity would have caused God to judge between them and send down punishment and destruction upon them. However, if all of humankind were initially upon disbelief and polytheism without any prior guidance and faith, then what does it mean for God to base His judgment upon their jealousy and animosity after knowledge had come to them? And what is the point of creating everyone and making the reason for their destruction part of their innate nature—does this not defeat the very purpose for which God created humankind?

This opinion is similar to what Christians have said about the issue of atonement: God created humans to be obedient to Him and to inhabit Paradise forever, but they disobeyed Him, thus nullifying the purpose of creation. To rectify this, God atoned for their sins with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Another explanation of the verse is that the meaning of '*word*' in *were it not for a prior word of your Lord* is the verse that comes later in this chapter, *Your Lord will indeed judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that about which they used to differ* (10:93).

However, the problem with this explanation is that the meaning of '*prior*' in this verse is prior in terms of revelation, and the verse cited as an

explanation of '*word*' here comes later in this chapter. As we have already discussed, this chapter was revealed all at once and, therefore, the subsequent verse could not have been revealed before this one. Furthermore, the verse cited concerns the Israelites specifically, and the expression '*between them*' in *Your Lord will indeed judge between them* refers to them. This is evident when the verse is read as a whole: *Certainly We settled the Children of Israel in a worthy settlement and We provided them with all the good things, and they did not differ until knowledge had come to them. Your Lord will indeed judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that about which they used to differ* (10:93).

There are verses which do not support such an understanding of '*prior*.' For example, *and were it not for a prior word of your Lord until a specified time, decision would have been made between them* (42:14). However, if the intended meaning of '*prior*' is in terms of divine judgment, then it should follow the first statement made by God Almighty regarding the misguidance of people, their association of partners with Him, and their disobedience. This would be nothing other than what He said when He first sent humans down to earth, which is the verse we have already mentioned above.

وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۖ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلَّهِ فَانْتَظِرُوا
إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(10:20) ***They say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' So say, 'The Unseen belongs only to Allah. So wait. I too am waiting along with you.'***

This verse, like the one before it, *and they worship besides Allah* (10:18) and the one before that, and *When Our manifest signs are recited to them* (10:15), enumerates the wrongdoings of the polytheists in their words and deeds. Then, it gives the Prophet arguments to deploy against them, as we saw in the first verses of the section. Therefore, the beginning of this verse, *They say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down...?'* follows on from the verse, *When Our manifest signs are recited to them...* (10:15).

There is a repeated emphasis on their denial of the Qur'an. Their statement, '*Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?*', even if it is a demand for a sign in addition to the Qur'an, it is actually said out

of contempt and disregard for the Qur'an and in order to belittle it, not because they consider it a divine sign. The evidence for this is God's statement, *So say, 'The Unseen belongs only to Allah...'* He does not merely say '*Say*' as in the other verses, as if to say: They ask you for another sign, not being satisfied with the Qur'an nor contented with its teachings. So, if it is not enough of a sign for them, then tell them: 'Signs are from the Unseen, which is the exclusive domain of God, and are not in my hands, so wait, for I too am waiting with you.'

This is what can be inferred from the verse. It also suggests that the Prophet was expecting a decisive sign that would clearly distinguish between truth and falsehood in addition to the Qur'an, that would judge between him and his own people. The nature of what has been promised in this verse, which God commands them to await, is expounded in the later verse, *Whether We show you a part of what We promise them, or take you away, their return will be to Us. Then Allah will be witness to what they do* (10:46), and several other verses after it.

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَّاءَ مَسَّتْهُمْ إِذَا لَهُمْ مَكْرٌ فِي آيَاتِنَا ۚ
قُلِ اللَّهُ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا ۚ إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُونَ مَا تَمْكُرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

(10:21) ***When We let people taste mercy after a distress that has befallen them, behold, they scheme against Our signs! Say, 'Allah is more swift at devising.' Indeed Our messengers write down what you scheme.***

The content of the verse, although it has general meanings that apply to most people in most situations, indicates that an individual will inevitably experience good fortune after adversity. It is rare that this pattern does not repeat itself in a person's life. However, from the preceding context of the verse, it seems to be concerned with the subject of the polytheists and their scheming regarding God's signs. The evidence for this is His statement, *Say, 'Allah is more swift at devising.'* Therefore, the focus here is on the scheming of a specific group, who are addressed by these verses, as they scheme with the divine signs of good fortune and adversity after their appearance.

One of their schemes concerns the Qur'an, which is both a divine sign and a mercy that God granted them after the adversity of the ignorance

that afflicted them, along with the hardships of life, humiliation, division, discord, and hatred that existed amongst them. And yet, in spite of it being a blessing, they scheme with the Qur'an, sometimes saying, '*Bring a Qur'an other than this, or alter it*', and sometimes saying, '*Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?*'

The verse explains to them that all of this is their scheming with God's signs and reveals that scheming with God's signs will only result in them coming to harm without benefiting them in any way. For God is swifter in planning than they are, and His schemes will overtake them before their schemes can overtake His signs. In fact, their scheming against God's signs is nothing other than God's scheming against them.

Therefore, in the verse, *When We let people taste mercy*, God uses the word 'taste' to allude to their savoring of God's mercy and care in small amounts, as tasting is used for a small portion of food. *Mercy after a distress that has befallen them*—He mentions mercy after distress (*darrā'*) instead of ease (*sarrā'*) to indicate that such ease is a divine mercy and not necessarily something that they are deserving of. It was their duty to acknowledge this mercy and to submit to what the verse summons them to, which is the oneness of their Lord and give thanks for His blessings. However, they respond differently, *they scheme against Our signs*, by interpreting events in a way that nullifies the significance of God's signs, such as saying that their forefathers also experienced the alternation of prosperity and adversity, and by making excuses that God does not accept, like saying, '*Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?*', or '*Should we follow the guidance with you, we will be dispossessed of our territory*' (28:57).

Therefore, He commands His Prophet to respond to them by saying, *'Allah is more swift at devising'* and then explaining the reason for this, *Indeed Our messengers write down what you scheme*. In other words, We have assigned witnesses over you, watchers whom We have sent to write down your deeds and record them. As soon as you take an action, they record it and preserve it, and its recompense is assigned to them before their plot takes effect, or it does not take effect at all, according to how scholars have interpreted it.

There is something worthy of note here, which is that the apparent meaning of God's saying, *This is Our book, which speaks truly against you. Indeed We used to record what you used to do* (45:29), as will be explained in

the commentary on the verse, is that the meaning of the angels writing the deeds of the servants is to bring their actions out of the state of potentiality into the realm of external reality, inscribing the very actions themselves upon the page of the cosmos. Hence, the reason that God is the swiftest in devising is because of the swiftness with which these angels record the deeds of God's servants. Therefore, the real meaning of the verse is: 'We are the ones who bring out the deeds you plot within yourselves and put them into external reality, so how can you hope to hide your plots from Us? After all, is plotting anything other than diverting others from their intended course through deception and concealment? In fact, what you claim to be plotting against Us is actually Our plotting against you, as We make you believe it is plotting and proceed with it against Us. This belief and proceeding is how We misguide you and lead you astray as a recompense for what your hands have earned.' A similar meaning appears in the verse, *O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment* (10:23).

In the verse, there is a shift from speaking in the third person to direct address in His saying, *Indeed Our messengers write down what you scheme* (10:21). This shift is an example of the Qur'an's sublime eloquence. Perhaps its eloquence is in how it embodies the verse, *Say, 'Allah is more swift at devising'* (10:21) at that very moment. As if, when He bid His Prophet to say, '*Allah is more swift at devising*', He intended to show them what this meant. So, He suddenly revealed it to them all at once, addressing them directly and explaining why He is swifter in devising than they are—because *Our messengers write down what you scheme*. Then, He concealed Himself from them once again, and they returned to their state of being absent from him, and this is shown by the speech returning to its prior state of speaking about them in the third person. The remaining address is directed to the Prophet, *It is He who carries you* ... and so on. This is perhaps one of finest and most eloquent shifts of address the Qur'an contains.

هُوَ الَّذِى يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۖ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا كُنتُمْ فِى الْفُلْكِ وَجَرَيْنَ
بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ
كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ ۙ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ
أَنجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

(10:22) *It is He who carries you across land and sea. When you are in the ships* (fulk)*, and they sail with them with a favorable wind, rejoicing in it, there comes upon them a tempestuous wind* (rīḥ ʿāṣif) *and waves assail them from every side, and they think that they are besieged, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, 'If You deliver us from this, we will surely be among the grateful.'*

Fulk means 'ship' and can be used to signify the singular or the plural. However, the meaning here is plural, as shown by the fact that God uses the plural '*they sail with them*.' A 'tempestuous wind' (*rīḥ ʿāṣif*) means one that blows strongly. *And they think that they are besieged* means that they believe that they are about to be swallowed up by the ocean and perish. '*... from this*' in their supplication, '*If you deliver us from this ...*' refers to the severity of the storm. The meaning of the verse is otherwise clear.

This verse also contains an incredibly eloquent shift in address from direct address to speaking in the third person when God says, *When you are in the ships and they sail with them with a favorable wind...*' Perhaps what this shift signifies is that they have returned to their state of absence from God, and God is now speaking to His Prophet and reserving the most marvellous part of the story for him to listen to and be amazed by. At the same time, it hints that God relinquishes His command that the Prophet should address the idolaters directly because they do not comprehend speech.

فَلَمَّا أَنْجَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا
بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ ۖ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ
فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(10:23) *But when He delivers them, behold, they commit violations* (yabghūn) *on the earth unduly* (bi ghayr ḥaqq)*! O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment. The wares of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return, whereat We will inform you concerning what you used to do.*

The basic meaning of *baghī* (from whence *yabghūn* is derived) is 'to seek' (synonymous with *ṭalab*), but it is primarily used in the context of

wrongdoing, because *baghī* means to seek what belongs to another by infringing their rights, which is why it is qualified here with the phrase *bi ghayr ḥaqq* ('unduly'). However, this is still not the primary meaning of *baghī* as, were this the case, the phrase *bi ghayr ḥaqq* would have been superfluous.

This sentence is a continuous to the previous verse. The entire passage—meaning, *It is He who carries you across land and sea ... they commit violations on the earth unduly!*—these serve as a piece of evidence or an exemplar in relation to the whole of the verse, *When We let people taste mercy after a distress that has befallen them ...* (10:21). Alternatively, it could be read as the same but specifically for the statement, *say, 'Allah is more swift at devising.'* In any case, God's saying, *O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment* (10:23) is what the entire purpose of the discourse in the previous verse hinges upon, even if it is not necessary part of the speech of the Prophet, so ponder on this.

O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment. The wares of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return: Note how the verse shifts from speaking in the third person to a form of direct address. Here, with the words, *O mankind ...*, God speaks to of all of humanity directly. This is not part of what God commanded the Prophet to tell people. The evidence for this is the remainder of the verse, beginning with, *then to Us will be your return ...*, as it is not fitting for this to be part of the Prophet's speech to the people.

The significance of this shift is similar to what we have said regarding the verse, *indeed Our messengers write down what you scheme* (10:21). It is as though God seeks to surprise them with His awareness of them while the Prophet is speaking to them. They imagine that their Lord is absent from them and not concerned with the intentions and aims that lay behind their actions. Then, he reveals Himself to them, demonstrating His presence with them in all their states and His all-encompassing knowledge of them by telling them: 'I am nearer to you and to your deeds than you are, so whatever you do in an attempt to transgress against Us and plot against Us, it happens only by Our leave and through Our hands, so how can you hope to transgress against us through it? On the contrary, you only transgress against your own selves, for it distances you from Us, and your sins will be recorded in the pages of your deeds. You only violate your own

selves, you will only enjoy the wares of this worldly life for a few days, and then you will return to Us and We will inform you about and clarify for you the reality of your actions.

The phrase, *the wares of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return*, is recited in the accusative case according to Ḥafṣ and ʿĀṣim, which renders the meaning: 'You will enjoy the wares of this world.' Others recite it in the nominative case, which renders it the predicate of an implicit subject, with the meaning: 'Your violations and your deeds are naught but the wares of this world.'

In both recitations, however, *the wares of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return*, expands upon the meaning of the phrase, *your violations are only to your own detriment*. Therefore, *the wares* ... provides the explanation of why their violations are only to their own detriment by providing more detail and clarification for the general statement.

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَادِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا أَتَاهَا أَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَنْ لَمْ تَغْنَ بِالْأَمْسِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(10:24) *The parable of the life of this world is akin to water which We send down from the sky. It mingles with the earth's vegetation from which humans and cattle eat. When the earth puts on its lustre* (zukhruf) *and is adorned, and its inhabitants think they have power over it, Our edict comes to it, by night or day, whereat We turn it into a mown field, as if it did not flourish the day before. Thus do We elaborate the signs for a people who reflect.*

Having mentioned the enjoyment of the worldly life in the previous verse, God now provides a parable to convey the reality of the matter to those who contemplate. This is an allegorical representation and not a direct comparison of one thing to another, even if this initially appears to be the case in His saying, *akin to water which We send down*. Similar examples are common in the Qur'anic parables. *Zukhruf* refers to adornment

and beauty. His saying, *it did not flourish* refers to a situation where staying in a place for an extended period does not bring any benefit. The remainder of the verse is clear.

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَىٰ دَارِ السَّلَامِ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

(10:25) *Allah invites* (yadʿū) *to the abode of peace, and He guides whomever He wishes to a straight path—*

'To invite' (*duʿā'* and *daʿwa*, from whence *yadʿū* is derived) means to call the invited person's gaze to that which they are being invited towards and to attract their attention. This is broader in meaning than 'to call' (*nidā'*), for a call is only by way of words and sounds, while an invitation can be with words, with gestures, or something else. A call must be made aloud, but no such requirement exists for an invitation.

God's invitation is twofold in nature: Creative and legislative. The creative invitation is when God brings into being whatever He wills, as if He is calling it to what He wills. For example, God says, *The day He invites you, you will respond to Him, praising Him* (17:52), this means that He will invite you to the life of the Hereafter and you will respond by accepting it. The legislative invitation is when He directs people to do what He wills in the religion through the language of His signs. On the other hand, the *duʿā'* of the servant to His Lord means to seek His mercy and consideration for himself by placing himself in a position of servitude and submission. This is why worship, in reality, is a supplication, as the servant places themselves in a state of servitude and connect through their Master by adopting a stance of subordination and humility. In doing so, the servant seeks His consideration as a Lord and a Master. And this is the essence of *duʿā'*.

It is to this reality that God refers with the verse, *Your Lord has said, 'Call Me, and I will hear you!' Indeed those who are disdainful of My worship will enter hell in utter humility* (40:60).

The issue has been confused by the author of *al-Manār*, who said in his commentary:

> 'The claim made by some interpreters and other scholars that "worship is one of the meanings of *duʿā'* ('supplication')" is not valid in the context of legislated worship. For example, fasting cannot be considered supplication in terms of language or

> religious law. Instead, supplication is the essence of natural worship (*al-ʿibāda al-fiṭriyya*) and the greatest pillar of legislated worship (*arkān al-taklīfiyya*) from it, as stated in a tradition. Every religious supplication (*duʿā' sharʿī*) is worship, but not every act of religious worship (*ʿibāda sharʿiyya*) is a supplication.'

The root of this misunderstanding comes from his belief that the meaning of supplication is to call for something while neglecting the analysis of its meaning we presented earlier.

The original meaning of peace (*salām*), according to al-Rāghib in the *Mufradāt*, is to be free from both external and internal sources of harm. And this meaning is found in all of its derivatives. Peace (*salām*) and security (*salāma*) are closely related in meaning for this reason. The key difference is that peace refers to safety in and of itself, while security refers to peace in relation to what one is safe from (one is safe 'from' something). One might say they are 'secure' (*fī salām*) or 'safe from such-and-such' (*fī aman min kadhā wa kadhā*).

Now, *al-Salām* is one of the names of God because His exalted essence is pure good, with no evil in it, while paradise is known as the Abode of Peace (*Dār al-Salām*) because it contains no evil and no harm will ever come to its inhabitants. Some have said that it is called the Abode of Peace because it is the abode of God, and God is *al-Salām*. In reality, these explanations lead to the same conclusion, because God is only called *al-Salām* because He is free from any evil. Furthermore, the context of the verse suggests that the attributive meaning of Peace is what is meant here.

God uses the term *salām* here without qualification, and there is nothing in His revelation that restricts it to specific conditions or modalities. Therefore, Paradise here is the abode of absolute peace, and such peace can only exist in Paradise. Whatever peace we find in this world is relative rather than absolute, for there is nothing in this world save that it is impeded or prevented from attaining what it desires, and there is no condition that is without its contraries and opposites.

If we take the meaning of peace here as absolute rather than relative, then we will grasp the meaning of the description of paradise as the Abode of Peace, and it will become clear that describing it with this attribute is no different to the description given in the verse, *there they will have whatever they wish*, for when a person is safe from all that they dislike and do not

love, this entails that they have the power to obtain whatever they wish and whatever they like.

The fact that the Abode of Peace is described as being with their Lord shows that nearness (*qurb*) denotes their presence (*ḥuḍūr*) with Him and that they are never heedless of Him there. We have already explained the meanings of guidance and the straight path previously, in our commentary on Sūrah al-Fātiḥa and elsewhere.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, about the verse, *those who do not expect to encounter Us say, 'Bring a Qur'an other than this...'* (10:15), we read: 'The Quraysh said, "O Messenger of God, bring us a Qur'an other than this, for this is something you have learnt from the Jews and the Christians." God told the Prophet to say, "If God had willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would I have informed you of it. I have lived among you for forty years before the revelation came to me, and I never spoke of any of its content until it was revealed to me."'

Author's comment: There is some uncertainty about the applicability of this explanation to the verse, in that the idolaters address the Prophet as 'Messenger of God.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Manṣūr b. Ḥāzim, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'The Messenger of God used to say, "*I fear*, if I disobey my Lord, *the punishment of a tremendous day* (10:15)", until Sūrah al-Fatḥ was revealed, and then he never again repeated these words.

Author's comment: This narration is not without issues.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites al-Bayhaqī who, in his *Dalā'il*, narrates from 'Urwa: 'On the Day of Conquest, 'Ikrama b. Abī Jahl fled and boarded a ship. The wind took it, and he called upon al-Lāt and al-'Uzza. The crew of the ship said, "No one is allowed to call upon anyone besides God alone with proper dedication." 'Ikrama said, "By God, if He is the only one on sea, then He is the only one on land as well." So, he converted to Islam.'

Author's comment: This report is transmitted via numerous distinct chains of narration.

(4) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Manṣūr b. Yūnus from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'Three things will turn back upon their owner, the

breaking of oaths (*nakth*), violating the rights of others (*baghī*), and scheming (*makr*). God says, *O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment* (10:23).'

Author's comment: A similar tradition is also narrated from Anas from the Prophet: 'Three will turn back upon their owner: The breaking of oaths, violating the rights of others, and scheming.' Then the Prophet recited the verse: *O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment*; *and evil schemes beset only their authors* (35:43); *so whosoever breaks his oath, breaks it only to his own detriment* (48:10). This is narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr*.

(5) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates from Abū Naʿīm, who narrates in *Ḥilya* from Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, he said: 'There is no act of worship better than entreating God for your needs, nothing repels the decree save for supplication (*duʿāʾ*). The swiftest good deed to bring reward is charity, the swiftest evil deed to suffer consequences is violating the rights of others. It is enough of a flaw for a man to perceive in others what he is blind to in himself, to command others to do what they cannot abstain from, or to trouble their sitting companion with something that does not concern them.'

(6) al-Suyūṭī narrates from Ibn Mardawayh, from Ibn ʿAbbās, that the Messenger of God said: 'If one mountain transgressed against the rights of another, the mountain that transgressed would crumble to dust.' (ibid.)

(7) In *Tafsīr al-burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Bābawayh, via his chain from al-ʿAlāʾ b. ʿAbd al-Karīm: 'I heard Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) say about the verse, *Allah invites to the abode of peace* (10:25): "The Peace is God Almighty. The abode He created for His allies is Paradise."'

(8) It is narrated from Ibn Shahrāshūb, from ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās, from his father and Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn: 'The verse, *Allah invites to the abode of peace*, refers to Paradise; *and He guides whomever He wishes to a straight path* refers to allegiance (*wilāyah*) to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.' (ibid.)

Author's comment: While this narration has an incomplete chain of narrators, it is either an example of extending the meaning of the verse to a new context (*jarī*) or of the esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*) of the Qurʾan. There are many other narrations with the same meaning.

Verses 26–30

In this passage, the topic of discussion once again turns to the rewards for righteous deeds and the return of everything to God, the Real One—as has already been discussed—and affirms His oneness in lordship.

لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ ۖ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

(10:26) *Those who are virtuous shall receive the best reward* (al-ḥusnā) *and an increase* (ziyāda). *Neither soot* (qatar) *nor abasement shall overcast* (yarhaq) *their faces. They shall be the inhabitants of paradise, and they shall remain therein.*

The word *ḥusnā* is the feminine form of *aḥsan* (the best), and it refers to the best reward (*al-mathūba al-ḥusnā*); *ziyāda* (increase) means they will receive more than they deserve. This is because God has made the reward and recompense for good deeds a part of His grace, then made this what is due to the doer of good deeds. He says, *They shall have their reward near their Lord* (3:199). Then He augments it and makes this addition a right for the doer of deeds, *Whoever brings virtue shall receive ten times its like* (6:160). Therefore, when God says, *Those who are virtuous shall receive the best reward*, this refers to their deserving the reward and the best recompense, and the increase is an increase beyond what they deserve, whether that is the like of their good deeds or ten times their likeness, as indicated by the verse, *As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds, He will pay them in full their rewards, and He will enhance them out of His grace* (4:173).

If the meaning of *ḥusnā* in *those who are virtuous shall receive the best reward* is, in fact, 'the best outcome' (*al-ʿāqiba al-ḥusnā*), there is nothing beyond that can be conceived beyond the best. Therefore, the *increase* mentioned in this verse refers to an increase out of God's grace that is utterly above what human minds conceive. This is what is indicated by the verse, *no one knows what has been kept hidden for them of comfort as a reward for what they used to do* (32:17), and the verse, *there they will have*

whatever they wish, and with Us there is yet more (50:35). It is obvious that these verses include everything that a person could possibly desire, and the extra beyond what they desire is something beyond their comprehension, so ponder on this.

Rahq (from whence is derived *yarhaq*) means to attach to something or cover it; *qatar* means black smoke or black dust. Describing the believers' faces as not being covered in soot or abasement is in contrast to the description of the inhabitants of Hell in the following verse, where their faces are darkened with soot, which is outward darkness, and abasement, which is inward darkness.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse is: 'For those who have done good deeds and acted virtuously in this world, they shall have the best reward and an increase out of God's grace, or the best of outcomes and an increase that their minds cannot comprehend. Their faces shall not be darkened by soot or abasement. They are the inhabitants of Paradise, and they will dwell in it forever.'

وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ بِمِثْلِهَا وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۖ مَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۖ كَأَنَّمَا أُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ قِطَعًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(10:27) ***For those who have committed misdeeds, the requital of a misdeed with its like, and they shall be overcast by abasement. They shall have no one to protect from Allah. As if their faces were covered with patches of the dark night. They shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain therein.***

Grammatically, the phrase, *the requital of a misdeed with its like*, is the subject of an implicit predicate, namely they shall have *the requital of a misdeed with its like*. It is also the predicate of a nominal sentence, whose subject is, *For those who have committed misdeeds*. It means that those who have committed misdeeds shall only be requited with a punishment that is like what they have earned. The punishment of an evil deed is an evil outcome.

They shall have no one to protect from Allah: They shall have no one to protect them from God, meaning from His punishment. This verse

negates the existence of the partners who they associate with God, who they believe will intercede on their behalf, insofar as it negates any protector who could repel God's harm from them, whether an associate, an intercessor, or a powerful opponent, or any other conceivable kind of protector.

As if their faces were covered with patches of the dark night **(qiṭaʿ min al-layl muẓlim)***:* The word *qiṭaʿ* is the plural of *qitʿa* ('piece'); grammatically, *muẓlim* ('dark') is an adverb of the word '*night*.' This evokes the image of a dark night that is cut into pieces, and these pieces are used to cover the faces of the wrongdoers, so that their faces are completely shrouded in darkness. Therefore, the face of each idolater is covered with a piece of the night. It is not the case, as some have read it, that the face of each idolater is shrouded by those pieces one after another, such that they are covered by one layer of darkness above the next, as there is nothing in the wording of the verse to indicate this.

They shall be the inmates of the Fire **(aṣḥāb al-nār)***, and they shall remain therein* **(hum fīhā khālidūn).** This shows that they will remain in Hell forever by the dual signification of *aṣḥāb* ('inmates', lit. 'companions') and *khālidūn* ('to live forever'); these words are used in the previous verse about the inhabitants of paradise to signify the same thing.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا مَكَانَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَاؤُكُمْ ۚ
فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ وَقَالَ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ إِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

(10:28) ***On the day when We gather them all together*** **(nashḥshuruhum jamīʿan)***, We shall say to those who ascribe partners, 'Stay where you are—you and your partners!' Then We shall set them apart from one another, and their partners will say, 'It was not us that you worshipped …'*

The term *ḥashr* ('to gather') includes all of the believers, the idolaters, and the partners they ascribe to God mentioned above. In this verse and the following ones, God mentions the idolaters and their partners, then refers to everyone with His saying in the subsequent verse: *There every soul will examine what it has sent in advance* (10:30).

We shall say to those who ascribe partners, 'Stay where you are—you and your partners!': In other words, you shall remain in your places, and the partners you shall ascribe shall remain in their places. This statement

implies that a separation has occurred between them and their partners, and the bond that connected them to their partners, which was a bond of illusion and false assumptions, has been severed. They are cut off from their partners, and their partners are cut off from them. It becomes apparent that their worship did not reach their partners and was not attached to them, as they worshipped their partners who were not truly partners.

The evidence for what we mentioned is God's saying following it, *And their partners will say, It was not us that you worshipped*. The statement, on its apparent meaning, is a sincere denial of being worshipped by them. They are not lying in this statement, as they invoke God as a witness to what they are saying. They do not mean to say that they never called people to worship them, as the statement does not suit this meaning either. Nor do they mean to imply that people were actually worshipping their desires and the devils who deceived them, as this would not fit with their claim of being unaware. Similarly, this would not fit with His saying afterward: *There every soul will examine what it has sent in advance*, the meaning of which will be discussed later. Instead, the intention of these partners is to deny the reality of worship by denying the reality of partnership and to attest to that with God's testimony and His knowledge of their unawareness of being worshipped.

Worship, which is the connection of servitude and humility from the worshipper to the one being worshipped, is only considered worship when it is connected and linked to the one being worshipped—fulfilling the meaning of the preposition 'for' (*la*) in our saying 'worship is for Him' (*al-ʿibāda lahu*). This can only occur with the awareness and knowledge of the one being worshipped. If there is no established knowledge, then true worship is not established, and it is only the outward form of worship.

It is clear that the meaning of His saying, *On the day when We gather them all together, We shall say to those who ascribe partners, 'Stay where you are—you and your partners!' Then We shall set them apart from one another* (10:28), is to reveal and emphasize the truth of the matter, which was concealed by illusions and desires in this world. The truth is that the real ownership, lordship, and sovereignty belong to God alone, and nothing belongs to others in terms of ownership and lordship to justify seeking their help or validating their worship.

When God unveils the truth on that Day, He will reveal to the

polytheists that their partners were not really partners or objects of worship for them in reality, due to their partners' unawareness of being worshipped. They only approached their partners with the outward form of worship, which illusions and desires made them believe was worship when it was not.

It is to this that the verse alludes, *When the polytheists sight their partners, they will say, 'Our Lord! These are our partners whom we used to invoke besides You.' But they will retort to them, 'You are indeed liars!'* (16:86).

From this also, it becomes clear that when their partners say, *'It was not us that you worshipped*' this is spoken in complete truth and seriousness. This, in turn, invalidates the claim of those who say that the meaning of this is, 'You did not worship us by our command and invitation' rather than 'You did not worship us at all.' This is because such a denial would be a lie, and a lie cannot be spoken in the Hereafter, as in the Hereafter they seek to avoid immoral acts.

Negating the essence of worship from their worship, in the sense that we have set forth here, is correct and true. On the other hand, any claim that what they did was, in fact, worship (albeit worship that was not invited by the partners), even if this is not necessarily a lie, can only be understood figuratively in this context, as there is no evidence from the text to support the hypothesis.

Lying is not permissible in the Hereafter if it is a deed of moral significance. However, if it occurs as a result of worldly attributes, there is nothing to preclude its occurrence. In fact, it is something that will actually take place, as God tells us in this and other verses, *Then their only excuse will be to say, 'By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists.' Look, how they forswear themselves, and what they used to fabricate has forsaken them!* (6:23–24)

The same is true of the claim made by some scholars that the intended meaning of their statement is, 'You did not actually worship us, but rather you worshipped your own desires, inclinations, and the devils that misled you.' Indeed, calling their actions the worship of their own desires and the devils is correct due to their actions, being a result of following desires and devils, does not negate the fact that their worship is also the worship of idols. God validates all three aspects in His speech: *They worship besides Allah that which neither causes them any harm, nor brings them any benefit* (10:18); *Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god* (45:23); *'Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, "Do not worship Satan. He is*

indeed your manifest enemy …?" (36:60);

It is evident that the partners (idols) reject the notion of being worshipped by the polytheists, not to establish that desires and the devils are worshipped alongside them, as this argument would not help them in the least. Furthermore, it would render their claim of being oblivious to their worship, as expressed in the statement *We were indeed unaware of your worship*, absurd. After all, desires, similar to the idols, which are inanimate objects, are also unaware of their worship.

Perhaps the one who propounds this argument has read the phrase, *it was not us that you worshipped*, as an exclusive statement. The ostensible meaning of this would be to confine the denial of worship to themselves and affirm the worship of others, rather than negating that any worship took place whatsoever, as they appear to affirm that the worship of the idolaters is indeed worship with the phrase, *your worship*.

However, the reality is that these partners declared to the polytheists, *it was not us that you worshipped*, in response to what the idolaters professed, as God relates, *'Our Lord! These are our partners whom we used to invoke besides You'* (16:86). In other words, the polytheists deny that they worshipped God and affirm that they worshipped the idols instead. Hence, the idols would only benefit by denying that the idolaters were worshipping them. As for whoever or whatever they were actually worshipping, the idols have no interest in this. Their sole concern is to absolve themselves from the claim of partnership with God. They support this by claiming that they were unaware of the worship, because if they had been conscious of the worship and had been worshipped, they would have been guilty, in some sense at least, of allowing themselves to be set up as partners beside God.

فَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغَافِلِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(10:29) *'… Allah suffices as a witness between you and us. We were indeed unaware of your worship.'*

The meaning of this is clear based on what has already been discussed.

هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُو كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا أَسْلَفَتْ ۚ وَرُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقِّ ۖ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(10:30) *There every soul will examine* (tablū) *what it has sent in advance, and they will be returned to Allah, their real master, and what they used to fabricate will forsake them.*

Balā' (from whence is derived the verb *tablū*) means 'to examine.' The word, *there*, refers to the place referred to in the previous verse, *We shall say to those who ascribe partners, 'Stay where you are—you and your partners!' Then We shall set them apart from one another* (10:28).

Therefore, this station is one where every soul is tested and examined for its past actions and what it has sent ahead for itself. Hence, the reality of its deeds will be revealed to it in the form of direct witnessing, not merely through them being recounted or explained to it. By witnessing the truth of everything first hand, it becomes apparent that God is the true master, all illusions fall away, and all the claims that human beings fabricate against the truth on the basis of their fantasies and desires vanish.

These fabrications and claims have all arisen from the connections we draw in this world between causes and causal factors, as well as the independence and authority that we wrongly attribute to these causes. There is no god but God, and there is no true authority except Him, the Exalted. When the reality of the matter becomes clear, the cloud of illusion dissipates, and the veil of lies is torn apart, it becomes evident that there is no true guardian except Him. All the deities that were fabricated by human minds are nullified, and all actions are rendered futile, except for those in which God is worshipped in truth.

Therefore, the three sections of the verse, namely, ..., ..., and ..., each clarify the other two in conveying the true essence of their meaning. The cumulative effect of these sections is that the reality of divine guardianship will be made manifest on the Day of Resurrection in a direct and unambiguous matter, showing that nothing but neediness and servitude belong to those besides God. Consequently, all false claims are invalidated, and the very basis for these illusions and lies crumbles.

This is also reference in these and other verses: *There, all authority belongs to Allah, the Real* (18:44); *The day when they will emerge, nothing about them will be hidden from Allah. 'To whom does the sovereignty belong today?' 'To Allah, the One, the All-paramount!'* (40:16); *... and all command that day will belong to Allah* (82:19).

Examining Narrations

(1) In the *Amālī* of Shaykh al-Mufīd, he narrates via his chain of transmitters from Abū Isḥāq al-Hamdānī, from the Commander of the Faithful, in his letter to Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr when he made the latter governor of Egypt and which he instructed him to read to the population: 'God says, *Those who are virtuous shall receive the best reward and an increase* (10:26)—the '*best reward*' is paradise, and the increase is this world.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated via Abū Jārūd, from Imām al-Bāqir about the same verse: 'The '*best reward*' is paradise, while the '*increase*' is this world. Whatever God gives them in this world, He will hold them to account regarding in the Hereafter, and He will combine for them the reward of this world and the Hereafter.'

Author's comment: These two narrations both pertain to the first meaning we mentioned for the verse (that *al-ḥusnā* here refers to 'the best reward'). As for the second meaning (that it refers to 'the best outcome'), al-Ṭabrisī narrates this in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* from al-Bāqir.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-burhān*, it is narrated from *Nahj al-bayān*, from ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm: 'The *increase* is God's gift.'

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates from al-Dārquṭnī and Ibn Mardawayh from Suḥayb concerning the same verse that the Messenger of God said: 'The *increase* is gazing upon the face of God.'

Author's comment: There are traditions with a similar meaning narrated via numerous chains of transmission from the Prophet in Sunnī sources, and we have already explained the correct meaning of these statements in our commentary on the verse, *My Lord, show me, that I may look at You!* (7:143).

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain going back to Abū Baṣīr from Imām al-Ṣādiq, concerning the verse, *As if their faces were covered with patches of the dark night* (10:27): 'Have you seen a house when it is night? It appears darkest from the outside. The same is true of their faces, which will increase in darkness.'

Author's comment: Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrates this from Abū Baṣīr from Imām al-Bāqir. It appears that the Imām is explaining the meaning of *patches of the dark night* from the verse.

(6) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Abū al-Shaykh narrates from al-Sudayy, concerning the verse, ... *and they will be returned to Allah, their real master* ... (10:30): 'It was abrogated by the verse, *that is because Allah is the master of the faithful, and because the faithless have no master* (47:11).

Author's comment: This is one of the most foolish explanations of the verse, for both it and the verse cited are concerning with two different aspects of the word 'master', one of which is outward and the other of which is inward.

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Verses 31–36

This section contains some powerful arguments for God's oneness in lordship, which He instructs His Prophet to present to the idolaters. These arguments are threefold, arranged according to their precision and strength.

The first argument follows the path of the idolaters and polytheists, who worship the deities behind their idols because they believe that they direct and manage the universe. Each of these deities is worshipped for the specific domain over which they exercise control in order to seek their blessings and to ward off their wrath or punishment. So, for example, people who lived in coastal regions would worship ocean deities, and likewise for peoples who lived on mountains or plains, or people of specific professions, such as learning, industry, or warfare, and so on—each would worship those deities whose power and domain encompassed the matter that concerned them most in order to propitiate them and, thereby, receive their blessings and ward off their anger.

The conclusion of the first argument is that the governance of the human realm and that of all other beings is solely undertaken by God Almighty and no other, as they acknowledge. Therefore, they must affirm His oneness in lordship and not worship anyone besides Him.

The second argument follows the path of the generality of the believers, as they do not pay excessive attention to worldly pleasures or physical delights. Instead, they focus primarily on the everlasting life of the Hereafter, the happiness or misery of which is determined by God's recompense for their deeds. Hence, when rational evidence establishes that the Resurrection is no different to the original act of creation, it is obligatory that none should worship anyone except God, nor should anyone take any lords besides Him, in order to seek His reward and avoid His punishment.

The third argument follows the path to which the hearts of the elect of the believers incline, namely that truth is whatever reason dictates they should follow. Insofar as God Almighty is the one who guides to the truth, rather than the lords the idolaters invoke besides God, then He alone should be followed and not those false deities.

These three arguments will be expounded more fully in our

commentary on the verses in question.

Were it not for this subtle point, it would have seemed more appropriate to mention the second of these arguments first, then the third, and then the first, or to mention the second argument and then combine the first and third after it.

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۚ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ ۚ فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

(10:31) *Say, 'Who provides for you* (yarzuqukum) *out of the sky and the earth? Who controls hearing and sight, and who brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and who directs the command?' They will say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Will you not then be wary?*

The term *rizq* ('provision', from whence the verb *yarzuqukum* is derived) means continuous sustenance, and His provision for the human world from the sky is the sending down of rains, snow, and the like. His provision from the earth is the nurturing of plants and animals from whence human beings meet their needs. It is through the blessings of these divine bounties that the human species continue to exist. What is meant by God's mastery of hearing and sight is His sovereignty over the human senses, which regulate the various types of enjoyment from the diverse provisions that God Almighty has allowed them to indulge in. Indeed, humans discern and distinguish what they desire from what they do not through the use of hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell, moving toward what they want and stopping or fleeing from what they dislike.

The senses are the means through which the benefits of divine sustenance are realized. Hearing and sight are singled out among them for mention due to the more apparent influence they have on vital activities compared to the other senses. God Almighty is the one who controls them, managing them through granting or withholding, increasing or decreasing.

'... and who brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and who directs the command?': Life, as initially perceived in humans, is the source from which a being's knowledge and

power become manifest, and it produces actions based on knowledge and power as long as it continues to live. When life ceases, the actions cease as well.

Later, through scientific observation, it was discovered that life is not exclusive to the animal kingdom, as initially thought. The essential aspect that necessitates life in an animal, which is having a soul that generates various actions without a single, natural pattern, like moving in different directions with different movements and being still without any motion, is also found in plants.

Similarly, ongoing research through modern methods supports this notion. The living cells found in animals, to which their vital activities are attributed, have counterparts in plants, making them no less alive than animals. Thus, scientific observation, in any case, leads to the generalization of life for all types of animals and plants.

Then, life, which is opposed to death, which is the cessation of the principle of vital activities, can be traced back, according to analysis, to the state of something that produces its desired effects. Similarly, death is the absence of such a state. Thus, the life of the earth is its state of being green and flourishing, and its death is the opposite. The life of an action is its state of achieving the purpose for which it was undertaken, and its death is the opposite. The life of a word is its state of having the desired impact on the listener, and its death is the opposite. The life of a human being is their adherence to the guidance provided by human nature, such as having a sound mind and a pure soul. Therefore, the Qur'an considers religion as life for humans because it sees the true religion, which is that of Islam, as identical with the innate God-given nature upon which the human being was originated.

Once this is clarified, it becomes apparent that bringing the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living varies in meaning, depending on the explanation of life and death. According to the first two views, it is the emergence of animals or animals and plants from something else, like sperm, eggs, and seeds. The living, just as their life does not last indefinitely, also do not begin life infinitely, nor is there any argument that can conclusively demonstrate that. The emergence of lifeless parts from animals, or animals and plants, occurs through separation.

According to the last view, which generalizes life to everything that

produces its desired effects, it means that something not beneficial in one domain emerges as something beneficial in that domain, through existence and generation, like the creation of living humans, animals, and plants from dead soil, and vice versa. It is also like the emergence of a wise and righteous person from someone without intellect and righteousness, and vice versa, and the emergence of a believer from a disbeliever and a disbeliever from a believer.

The apparent meaning of the noble verse, considering its tone and its context as something being directly addressed to the idolaters, is that the intended meaning of bringing the living out of the dead and vice versa refers to this latter explanation. The verse establishes an argument against the polytheists based on the path they took in arguing for adopting various deities. They believed that the observable world is a collection of various, scattered entities, both celestial and terrestrial, including humans, animals, plants, seas, lands, and many other things beyond that. Each of these is under the management of a mediator before God, whom they worship by worshipping their idols and lesser deities to draw nearer to the Supreme Deity. In summary, the different domains of the created world necessitate the existence of different entities to direct each of them, necessitating the existence of numerous lords besides God.

The verse refutes their claim by explaining that the various domains of governance within the created world all ultimately depend on God Almighty, indicating that God alone is the Lord of everything. The verse addresses them by pointing out that they acknowledge that all matters concerning them, such as their sustenance and what benefits them and others, ultimately come from God Almighty. Therefore, He is the One who manages their affairs and the affairs of others, and He alone is the Lord, with no other lord besides Him.

The verse begins by calling attention to those matters that concern humans—meaning the statement, *Say, 'Who provides for you out of the sky and the earth?'*—and concludes by calling attention to those things that are beneficial to both them and others—meaning the statement, *'... and who directs the command?'* Now, it is evident from the context that the intended meaning of the phrase, *who controls hearing and sight, and who brings forth the living from the dead*, refers to the particular management of human affairs. Therefore, when the verse says that God has control over

the hearing and sight, it means the hearing and sight of individual humans. Likewise, when it says He is responsible for bringing forth the living from the dead and vice versa, this means amongst humans. Moreover, it is obvious that the life specific to human beings is their possession of the blessings of intellect (*ʿaql*) and religion (*dīn*).

Thus, the intended meaning of bringing forth the living from the dead and vice versa is bringing forth a human being who is alive and flourishing with human happiness from a human being who is dead and has no happiness, and vice versa.

God Almighty instructs His Prophet to present an argument for His oneness in lordship, so He commands him to say: *Say, 'Who provides for you out of the sky and the earth* by sending rains, causing growth, and bringing things into being? *Who controls hearing and sight* that you possess, so that you can benefit from your sustenance by identifying the good provisions through them? Without them, you would not have succeeded in this, and you would have perished like the last of you. *And who brings forth the living from the dead*—everything that is beneficial from something that is not—*and brings forth the dead from the living*—bringing forth the felicitous human being from the wretched one and the wretched one from the felicitous one—*and who directs the command* throughout all of creation?'

They will say, 'Allah.' They will acknowledge that all of these domains of governance in the human realm and beyond ultimately devolve to God, as this is something that the idolaters believed. Therefore, God commands His Prophet to first rebuke them for not being sufficiently wary of God by worshipping deities besides Him in spite of the overwhelming evidence they have seen, and then to draw the conclusion from this evidence that they should affirm His oneness and worship Him alone: *Say, 'Will you not then be wary?'* He concludes by saying, at the start of the next verse: *That, then, is Allah, your true Lord* (10:32).

فَذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ ۖ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ ۖ فَأَنَّىٰ تُصْرَفُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(10:32) ***That, then, is Allah, your true Lord. So what is there after the truth except error? Then where are you being led away?***

The first sentence, *That, then, is Allah, your true Lord*, is the conclusion

drawn from the argument in the previous verse. The Qur'an describes God as their '*true*' *Lord* to clarify the essence of the argument and as a prelude to the subsequent statement, *So what is there after the truth except error?*

When God says, '*So what is there after the truth except error?*', this is the logical corollary of the above argument, drawing the conclusion that the polytheists are misguided in their worship of idols. If God's lordship alone is true, then guidance lies in following and worshipping Him alone, for guidance is associated with the truth and nothing else. Thus, nothing remains except error for those who follow falsehood.

Therefore, the intended meaning of the statement is: What is there after the truth, which comes with guidance, except falsehood, which comes with misguidance? The Qur'an omits something from both clauses for the sake of conciseness. It is said, '*So what is there after the truth except error?*' Some scholars have said that this verse is an example of reciprocal ellipsis (*iḥtibāk*), a rhetorical device in which there are two opposing statements, and something is left implicit in each and indicated by the other. The intended meaning of the statement is: 'What is there after the truth except falsehood? And what is there after guidance except error?' Here, 'falsehood' is omitted from the first statement and 'guidance' from the second one. This leaves the phrase, *So what is there after the truth except error?* The reason is the one we have mentioned above.

Then, the verse is brought to a close with the statement, *Then where are you being led away?*, meaning, for how long will you turn away from the truth, which comes with guidance, towards misguidance that accompanies falsehood?

كَذَٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

(10:33) *Thus the word of your Lord became due against those who transgress that they shall not have faith.*

The context of this verse suggests that the *word* that God Almighty speaks against the transgressors is that they will not believe, meaning that He has decreed for them an inevitable fate: The transgressors, while persisting in their transgressions, will not believe and will not attain divine guidance to faith. God says elsewhere, *and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot* (5:108).

Based on this, the word '*thus*' refers to what was deduced from the previous verse: That the polytheists turned away from the truth and transgressed, falling into misguidance because there is nothing beyond the truth except misguidance.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse, *Thus the word of your Lord became due ...* is that the divine word and the inevitable decree concerning the transgressors—that they will not believe—has thus become true and established in objective reality; its referent is that they have deviated from the truth and fallen into misguidance. This means: 'We did not decree the lack of guidance and faith of the transgressors unjustly or arbitrarily, but rather we decreed it because they turned away from the truth, transgressed, and fell into misguidance, for there is no middle ground between the two.'

The verse implies that the self-evident propositions, ordinances, and clear laws that govern the material realm, such as our assertion that 'there is no middle ground between truth and falsehood or between guidance and misguidance', have a kind of basis in the divine decree (*al-qaḍā' al-ilāī*) and are not inherently established in God Almighty's domain by virtue of their own nature.

Some commentators have argued that the term 'word' (*kalima*) in the verse refers to the 'word' of punishment (in other words, that they have been sentenced to divine punishment), and the phrase 'that they shall not have faith' (*annahum lā yu'minūn*) is intended to explain why this sentence became due against them, with the assumption that there is an implicit *lām* (the Arabic preposition for 'because', so *li-annahum lā yu'minūn*) in the sentence. In this case, the meaning of the verse is that once this conclusive argument has been established against them, the word of your Lord, which is a threat of punishment, becomes due against those who transgress. They are sentenced to this punishment because they do not believe.

However, this explanation is not without its flaws, as the link between the argument and their punishment is not apparent, nor is it unanimously agreed upon. The argument is inherently established against them, while the punishment is not established in the same way but rather for another reason, which is that they do not believe.

The argument presented, as we saw in the previous explanation, is a simple one that the polytheists acknowledge the truth of. However, they diverted it from its intended meaning and instead tried to use it to prove

the lordship that they claimed for their false deities and that these deities are deserving of worship besides God. They say that the governance of each affair of the general affairs of the world is up to one of these deities, who is the lord of that affair. They worship the idols and statues of these lords to propitiate them so that they may intercede for them with God due to their closeness to Him.

Hence, the verse takes their acknowledgement that the governance of the cosmos belongs to God Almighty—and how could they not belong to Him when He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything?—and draws the conclusion from this that, according to their own beliefs, the true reality of lordship belongs to Him alone and, therefore, He is the one deserving of worship, not anyone else.

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ۚ قُلِ اللَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ۖ فَأَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

(10:34) *Say, 'Is there anyone among your partners who originates the creation and then brings it back?' Say, 'Allah originates the creation, then He will bring it back.' Then where do you stray?*

The verse presents an argument from the perspective of the origin and the return (meaning the Creation and the Resurrection). Indeed, the One who originates everything and then brings it back is worthy that human beings should worship Him out of wariness of the Day of the Encounter, to be safe from His painful punishment and to attain His great rewards on the Day of Resurrection.

Since the polytheists, who are the ones being addressed with the argument, do not believe in the Resurrection, God Almighty commands His Prophet to respond to the question himself by saying, *Allah originates the creation, then He will bring it back. Then where do you stray?*—and until when will you wander from the path of truth?

Note that the fact that the argument in this verse relies on the doctrine of the origin and the return does not mean it is based on an unclear or unexplained premise. Different approaches have been used in the divine speech to demonstrate the truth of the Resurrection, such as the argument from the perspective of the necessity of God's actions having an ultimate purpose, or from the perspective of the principle of divine justice (*al-ʿadl*

al-ilāhī) necessitating God's recompense of human beings for their deeds, among others. Almighty God has refuted doubts about resurrection and judgment on more than ten separate occasions in Qur'an.

As previously indicated, the argument presented here is a general one for all believers who worship Him, the Most High, out of fear of punishment or out of desire for the reward that He has prepared for them on the Day of Resurrection.

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ ۚ قُلِ اللَّهُ يَهْدِي لِلْحَقِّ ۗ أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّنْ لَا يَهِدِّي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ ۖ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(10:35) *Say, 'Is there anyone among your partners who may guide to the truth* (yahdī ilā al-ḥaqq)*?' Say, 'Allah guides to the truth* (yahdī li al-ḥaqq)*. Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is guided not unless he is guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?'*

The phrases *yahdī ilā al-ḥaqq* and *yahdī li al-ḥaqq*, both mean 'to guide to the truth', as the verb *yahdī* can be made transitive with both the preposition *ilā* (lit. 'to') and the preposition *li* (lit. 'for'). The use of the preposition *li* can be seen in many places throughout the Qur'an, such as in the verses, *Does it not dawn upon them ...?* (a wa lam yahdī la-hum, 32:26), and *Indeed this Qur'an guides to what is most upright* (li allatī hiya aqwam, 17:9), amongst others. Therefore, the claim that the use of the preposition *li* in the present verse signifies causation (giving the meaning of 'because') is not correct.

God Almighty instructs His Prophet to relay this, the third of the arguments; it is a rational argument that is intended for the elect of the believers to rely on. The explanation of this argument is as follows: It is a matter of innate human nature, which the human intellect deems obligatory, that a person must follow the truth. Even if someone deviates from the truth in some actions and follows something else, whether as a mistake, due to a doubt, or because they followed their own desires, they only follow this other thing because they believe it to be the truth and because they were mistaken in this regard. Thus, they justify their actions based on what

they consider to be true. Therefore, it is obligatory to follow the truth in all circumstances, without restriction or qualification.

Based on this, it is also obligatory to follow the one who guides you to the truth by virtue of the truth they possess, and it is necessary to give them priority over those who do not guide to the truth or who guide to something else, because following the one who guides to the truth is, in essence, following the truth itself, which is self-evidently obligatory to follow.

The argument is based on this self-evident premise. It begins by asking them about the partners they ascribe to God, if any of these can guide them to the truth. It is clear that the polytheists have no affirmative answer to this, as their partners, whether they are inanimate objects without life, like idols and statues, or living beings, such as angels, deities, jinn, or tyrants like Pharaoh, Nimrod, and others, do not possess the power to bring harm or benefit, nor death, life, or resurrection for themselves, let alone others.

As they have no affirmative answer to this, they cannot respond. Therefore, God instructs the Prophet to answer on their behalf, affirming that guidance to the truth is from God Almighty, *Say, 'Allah guides to the truth.'* Indeed, it is God alone who guides everything to its intended purpose and to those matters necessary for its existence, as we read in the verse, *Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it* (20:50), and in the verse, ... *who created and proportioned, who determined and guided* (87:2–3). He is the One who guides humans to the happiness of life and invites them to Paradise and forgiveness by His leave, by sending messengers, revealing scriptures, legislating laws, and commanding the faithful among them to spread the call to the true religion among people.

In our commentary on the verse, *this is the truth from your Lord, so do not be among the sceptics* (3:60), we saw that the truth of belief, speech, and action is only true when it conforms to the cosmic order that governs the universe, which is nothing other than God's acting upon reality. Therefore, the reality is that truth is only true by virtue of His will and His desire.

Since it has been conclusively established that none of their partners can guide anyone to the truth, and that God Almighty is the one who guides, He asks them, *Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is guided not unless he is guided?* to determine which should be given preference between following Him, the Exalted, and following the partners which they have ascribed to Him. It is God who guides to the

truth, while the partners they ascribe neither guide nor are guided without others. It is self-evident that priority should be given to the one who guides over the one who does not, meaning they should follow Him instead of following them. However, the polytheists judge the opposite to be right, so He rebukes and chastises them by saying, *What is the matter with you? How do you judge?*

Notice that the verse uses the expression, *worthier to be followed,* which is in the comparative form (*al-tafḍīl*), without qualifying this with anything else. This indicates that it is preferable or better to follow God, rather than declaring that God is the one and only who should be followed. This is because, while there is absolutely no doubt that following God is the truth and nothing else, and following others besides Him has no share in the truth, the verse presents this argument from the standpoint of preference to make it easier for the idolaters to accept it while avoiding provoking their prejudice or inflaming their foolishness.

Pay attention to God's eloquence in His saying, *Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is guided not* (lā yahiddī) *unless he is guided?*

The common reading of the verb *yahiddī* is with a *kasra* on the *hā'* and a *shadda* on the *dāl*, it being originally *yahtadī*. The apparent meaning of the phrase, *he who guides not unless he is guided* is that he can only be guided by others, and that he cannot guide himself.

Now, in this passage, the clause *He who guides to the truth* is juxtaposed with *he who is guided not*. However, the opposite of saying someone 'guides to the truth' is to say that they 'do not guide to the truth', while the opposite of 'is not guided to the truth' should be 'is guided to the truth.' On the surface, then, these two clauses do not appear to be opposites. However, through the unusual pairing of *He who guides to the truth* with *he who is guided not unless he is guided*, this verse shows that being guided by another necessarily means that a person will not be guided to the truth and that, conversely, someone who is innately guided to the truth will be able to guide others to it as well. Therefore, whoever guides to the truth must first be guided themselves, but not by virtue of anyone else guiding them, as whoever relies on others for guidance cannot guide to the truth.

This is what the apparent meaning of the verse suggests. And it is undoubtedly the fairest indication that what it says is based on the truth

alone, without the embellishment and indulgence that we habitually rely on in conversations among ourselves. As a matter of convention, we generally say that anyone who speaks the truth and calls others to it is guiding to the truth, even if they do not really believe in it themselves, or if they believe it but do not act upon it, or if they act upon it but do not fully understand its meaning, regardless of whether they are guided to it by themselves or guided to it by others.

However, guidance to the truth, meaning leading to the explicit truth and the core of reality, is only from God Almighty or from those who are guided by themselves, meaning those whom God guides without any intermediary between them and Him. They are guided by God and guide others by the command of God. A brief discussion on this idea has already been presented in our commentary on the verse, *And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them* (2:124).

In light of our above discussion of the verse, the following points have become clear:

First, the guidance referred to in the verse is not merely about presenting the path and showing the right way; rather, it means leading to the desired outcome. This is because it is an established and self-evident fact that anyone can point out the path of truth, regardless of whether the speaker has found the path through others or on their own, or whether they have not found it at all. The verse speaks of a kind of guidance that is not the purview of just anyone; hence, it becomes evident that the meaning of guidance here is not merely to show others the path of truth.

Secondly, His saying, *or he who is guided not, except that he be guided*, refers to those who do not guide themselves. This is broader in meaning than those who are guided by others or those who are not guided at all, such as idols and statues, which are inanimate and cannot be guided by anyone. The clause, *except that he be guided*, is an exception from His saying, *or he who guides not*, which is more general than not being guided at all or being guided by others. The phrase, *that he be guided* (an yuhdā) is a verb with the preposition *an*, which gives it the meaning of an infinitive. Now, a verbal sentence with the meaning of an infinitive does not mean that the activity denoted by the verb has actually taken place, unlike an infinitive that is attached to its subject. For example, consider the difference between the verse, *and to fast is better for you* (an taṣūmū khayrun

lakum, 2:184), which does not suggest that fasting has taken place, and the verse, *We were indeed unaware of your worship* (in kunnā ʿan ʿibādatikum la-ghāfilūn), which definitely does indicate the occurrence of worship.

Therefore, the phrase … *or he who is guided not except that he be guided?* refers to someone who has not be guided from himself and needs someone else to guide him, and it is obvious that one person can only be guided by another if they are naturally capable of being guided. As for someone who cannot accept guidance, then the attribute of '*is guided not*' will remain with him.

Commentators have offered some unusual explanations of the exception, *except that he be guided*':

For example, one such reading is that this exception is exhaustive and encompasses all circumstances (meaning that only those who are guided can guide others). Otherwise, if we read it to mean that whoever the polytheists take up as partners besides God cannot guide others, this would include Jesus, Ezra, and the angels—as these have all been taken up as partners besides God—when they, in fact, did guide others to the truth through God's guidance and revelation, as we read in the verse of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', *We made them leaders* (Imāms)*, guiding by Our command* (21:73).

The problem with this reading is that it means that no one can guide unless they are first guided by God. Therefore, they can guide others after they have been guided through God's guidance. However, as you can see, this distorts the essence of the verse, as someone who is not guided to the truth themselves is not fit to guide others to the truth, as they only touch the truth from behind a veil themselves, so how can they bring others to it?

In addition, this reading of the verse does not even cover the idols that are the primary subject of the argument, as idols are not capable of guidance. It is implausible to present an argument against idol worship that does not include idols but instead includes Jesus and Ezra, who are considered sacred by other religious groups like the Jews and Christians, even though they were not the intended subjects of the verse, even if the verse implicitly includes them and others within its criteria.

Another unusual reading of the verse that commentators have suggested is as follows: That the exception it contains is discontinuous (*istithnā' munqatiʿ*, meaning that the excepted set were not originally included within the set from which they are being excluded) and that the

phrase *he who is guided not* is referring only to the idols, which are not capable of receiving guidance anyway. Therefore, the meaning of the verse becomes, '...or those who are not guided at all, like idols, unless God guides them, whereat they will be guided.'

The problem with this reading is that, if we interpret the verse in this way, the comparison between the phrase, *who guides to the truth*, and the phrase, *or he who is guided not*, does not yield the intended contrast unless the meaning is interpreted as something like: 'Is the one who guides to the truth more deserving of being followed, or the one who does not guide at all, unless God guides them, then they are guided and guide others?' However, this is to be rejected because there is no reason to specifically mention the likes of idols amongst those who are not guided at all. Without this, there is no need to say that the exception is discontinuous. Instead, the exception should include both those who are not guided at all, whether by themselves or others, and those who are not guided by themselves but who are guided by others, such as the angels, for example. In this case, the same objection we raised to the previous reading also applies here.

Another unusual reading is that the meaning of *he who is guided not* are the idols that are incapable of receiving guidance, and the meaning of 'except ...' (*illā*) here is, in fact, 'until ...' (*ḥattā*), meaning *he who is guided not* until *he is guided*.

However, the problem with this reading is that the question expressed in the verse then becomes: 'Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who is guided not until he is guided to the truth?' However, this renders the phrase 'even if he is guided to the truth' superfluous to the argument. This is in addition to the fact that it is not established in the rules of classical Arabic that the particle *illā* can be used in the sense of 'until...'. In fact, even if we assume that it can, there are very few examples of it, and it is not considered eloquent speech.

Another unusual reading is that the meaning of *he who is guided not unless he is guided* refers to the angels and the jinn who are worshipped besides God and who accept guidance from God even if they are not guided by themselves. Or that it refers to the leaders who have gone astray and call others to disbelieve, for while they are not guided, they can receive guidance, and if they were guided to the truth, they would guide others to it too.

The problem with this reading is that the verse occurs in the context of

a debate with idol worshippers, and interpreting the phrase *he who is guided not unless he is guided* as referring to the angels, jinn, or leaders who have gone astray takes it out of the scope of relevance to the discussion at hand.

The third point to become clear from our discussion from the verse above is that guiding to the truth means conveying people towards it, and this is something that can only be done by those who are guided through themselves. This means that there is no intermediary between them and God in the matter of guidance, whether this was the case from the very beginning of their existence or whether it came about by virtue of a special grace they received from God, such as the prophets and their successors amongst the Imāms. As for guidance in the sense of showing people the path of truth and describing the route they must take, this is obviously not something that is restricted to the God or to the prophets and Imāms. See, for example, the verse in which God relates the words of the believer from Pharaoh's clan, *And he who had faith said, 'O my people! Follow me, I will guide you to the way of rectitude'* (40:38); and see also the verse, *Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful* (76:3).

When God addresses the Prophet—who is a leader—in the verse, *You cannot guide whomever you wish, but Allah guides whomever He wishes* (28:56) and other similar verses, this serves to clarify the distinction between possessing a function inherently and acquiring it subordinately. This is in the same vein as the verses about death, knowledge of the unseen, and other such matters, which show that God Almighty is the true and inherent possessor of these functions, while others only possess them through God's bequest, in a subordinate or incidental manner, and they become a means for these functions to be realized by God's leave. He says, *We made them leaders* (Imāms)*, guiding by Our command* (21:73). The narrations also refer to this, and they state that guiding humankind to the truth is the responsibility of the Prophet and his Household. We have already discussed some aspects of divine guidance previously.

When God says at the end of the verse, *What is the matter with you? How do you judge?*, it is a rhetorical question that expresses amazement and astonishment at their decision to follow their partners, despite the clear judgment of reason that it is not permissible to follow those who are not guided and do not guide to the truth.

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا ۚ إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(10:36) ***Most of them just follow conjecture; indeed conjecture is no substitute for the truth*** (lā yughnī min al-ḥaqq shay'an). ***Indeed Allah knows best what they do.***

The verb *yughnī* can take an object with either of the prepositions *min* or *'an* ('from', 'of'), and both forms appear in the Qur'an, sometimes taking an object with *min*, as in the present verse, and sometimes with *'an*, as in the verse, *My wealth did not avail me* (mā aghnā 'annī māliyah) (69:28).

The reason the verse says that the majority of the disbelievers follow conjecture is because a minority among them—and they are the leaders of error—are actually certain of the truth, but they have given preference to falsehood over it and call towards falsehood for no other reason than enmity, as God says: *and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves* (2:213). As for the majority, they blindly follow the opinions of their leaders because of the good opinion they hold of them.

Indeed Allah knows best what they do: This provides a rationale for the statement, *Most of them just follow conjecture*, meaning that God knows well what they do and He knows well that they are following conjecture.

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Verses 37–45

The discussion now returns to the matter of the Qur'an itself, namely that it is a book that has been sent down from God, in which there is no doubt. These verses furnish the Prophet with arguments in this regard, and they are connected to the earlier verse, *Say, 'Is there anyone among your partners who may guide to the truth?' Say, 'Allah guides to the truth …'* (10:35). It has been mentioned earlier that one of the ways in which He guides people to the truth is by guiding them to His religion, of which He approves, through sending revelations to His prophets and through the scriptures He has sent down to them, such as the books of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. These verses mention this and establish the argument that the Qur'an is one of those that guide to the truth. That is why they are pointed out along with it in the verse, *rather it is a confirmation of what was before it, and an elaboration of the Book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of all the worlds* (10:37).

At the end of this section of verses, the Qur'an once again mentions the Resurrection, which is one of the key themes of the chapter we identified earlier.

وَمَا كَانَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَىٰ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَٰكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(10:37) *This Qur'an could not* (mā kāna) *have been fabricated by anyone besides Allah; rather it is a confirmation of what was before it, and an elaboration of the Book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of all the worlds.*

As we have already discussed elsewhere, negating an attribute or a quality using the negation of the verb 'to be' (*kāna*)—as we see here with *mā kāna*—negates not only the attribute itself but the very potentiality of it. Therefore, this is more eloquent and rhetorically powerful than merely negating the attribute. Note the difference between the two statements: *Mā kāna Zayd li-yaqūm* ('Zayd could not stand') to *mā qāma Zayd*

('Zayd did not stand') or *lam yaqum Zayd* ('Zayd has not stood'). The first means that not only did Zayd not stand but that he lacked the capacity to do so, while the second and third merely deny that he stood. There are many examples of this in the Qur'an. See, for instance, the verses: ... *but they could not believe* (mā kānū li-yu'minū) *something they had denied before* (10:74); ... *You could not know* (mā kunta tadrī) *what the Book is* (42:52); ... *God could not have wronged them* (mā kāna Allāh li-yaẓlimahum) (29:40).

Therefore, when God says, *This Qur'an could not have been fabricated by anyone besides Allah*, some commentators have said this denies the very possibility of the Qur'an being fabricated, which is more eloquent than merely denying the actuality of such fabrication. Therefore, this passage means: 'The nature of this Qur'an is such that it could not have been fabricated and falsely attributed to God by someone other than He.'

... rather it is a confirmation of what was before it (bayna yadayhi)**:** This means confirming those scriptures that are present and already revealed, namely the Torah and the Evangel, as it is narrated from Jesus, his saying: *O Children of Israel! Indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you, to confirm what is before me* (bayna yadayya) *of the Torah* (61:6). The terms *bayna yadayhi* and *bayna yadayya* literally mean 'between its/my hands.' They are used here to refer to the scriptures already present at the time, because there are other scriptures besides these that are not present, such as the scriptures of Noah and Abraham, and all of them came 'before' the Qur'an. So, when all of them are considered as preceding the Qur'an, the closest to it in time would be the Torah and the Evangel, described as being 'between its hands.'

Some might say that the meaning of *bayna yadayhi* here is merely whatever teachings were previously revealed, such as the doctrines of the Resurrection, the Final Judgement, and the Recompense. However, this is not a sound reading.

... and an elaboration (tafṣīl) ***of the Book:*** This follows on from '*a confirmation ...*'. What is meant by '*the Book*' in this context is the divine scripture that is sent down by God to His Prophets. *Tafṣīl* ('elaboration') literally means to separate (*faṣl*) between its parts that are all merged together, with some aspects of each contained in the others, through clarification and explanation.

In this, there is an indication that all the divine religions revealed to the

prophets are one and the same, and there is no difference between them except in terms of their level of detail, and the Qur'an provides the detail for what others have summarized, as He, the Exalted, said: *Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam* (3:19).

Indeed, the Qur'an is a detailed elaboration of what previous divine scriptures summarized, and it is a guardian over them all, as we read in the verse, *We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book and as a guardian over it* (5:48).

... there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of all the worlds: In other words, there is no doubt in it; it is from the Lord of the Worlds, and the second statement serves as an explanation for the first one.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

(10:38) ***Or do they say, 'He has fabricated it?' Say, 'Then bring a chapter like it, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah, should you be truthful.'***

Here, the word '*or*' is being used to introduce a new idea, meaning, 'Rather, they say he has fabricated it.' The pronoun '*it*' here refers to the Qur'an, and the fact that God describes a '*chapter*' as being '*like*' the Qur'an shows that the term 'Qur'an' can designate both much of the scripture and a little of it.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse is: 'Tell those who claim he has fabricated it: "If you are truthful in your claim, then bring a chapter like this fabricated Qur'an and call on whoever you can besides God for assistance and support, for if it is a fabricated discourse then it is a human discourse and you should be able to produce something like it!"' This is a clear challenge to bring something like a single one of the Qur'an's chapter, whether long or short.

From this, the following points become apparent:

Firstly, the challenge is not limited to a specific chapter, as they did not accuse the Qur'an of being fabricated in part, but rather in its entirety. They are tasked with producing a chapter like one of those they claim to be fabricated, a claim they make about the entirety of the Qur'an, not just a part of it.

No credence should be given to the argument that the term 'a chapter' is left indefinite for emphasis or diversification, and what is meant is a chapter that contains stories of the prophets, prophecies, and promises for this world and the hereafter, as the accusation fabrication can only be made in relation to statements, not commandments. Also to be disregarded is the argument that what is meant is a long chapter like the present one, which contains fundamental teachings of the religion, accompanied by promises of divine reward and threats of divine punishment.

This is because the entire Qur'an, with all of its verses, is attributed to God, and there is no distinction between those verses containing statements and those containing commandments, or between long and short chapters, or even a single verse. The claim that it is fabricated applies to the whole, because to call one part false is to call the whole book false.

Secondly, the challenge in the verse does not only concern the eloquence and rhetorical power of the Qur'an alone. The context of this verse and other verses that discuss this challenge to the disbelievers show that it is based on the Qur'an's attributes of perfection and beauty, which comprehensively encompasses divine teachings; the fundamentals of religious laws, whether these pertain to the rules of worship, civil, political, economic and judicial laws, noble morals, or good manners; stories of prophets and past nations; knowledge of the Unseen and prophecies of the future; the descriptions of angels, jinn, heaven, earth, wisdom, exhortation; promises of divine reward and warnings of divine retribution; accounts of the Origin and the Return; the strength of its arguments; the eloquence of its speech; its enlightenment; and its guidance, without any part differing from another. Now, add to this the fact that the eloquence and rhetorical power of the Qur'an are beyond the reach of human hands.

Early scholars and their followers limited the miraculous nature of the Qur'an to its eloquence and rhetorical power, and wrote numerous books and treatises on this subject. This diverted them from contemplating the truths of the Qur'an and delving into its knowledge. This led them to consider its meanings as matters thrown in the path, equally available to the Bedouin, the city dweller, the commoner, the specialist, the ignorant one, and the scholar. They believed that the Qur'an's brilliance lay in the arrangement of its words rather than the structure of its meanings, and that there was no value beyond that. But God Almighty has described the

Qur'an with every beautiful attribute that is relevant to this challenge, such as it being light, mercy, guidance, wisdom, admonition, clear proof, a clarification for all things, a detailed book, a source of healing for the believers, a decisive statement, and not a joke. He also describes it as setting-point of the stars, and says that there is no discrepancy within it, but at no point does He explicitly invoke its eloquence.

God has stated that the disbelievers will not produce anything like it, even if they were to call upon anyone they can apart from Him, and even if humans and jinn were to come together to do so, without restricting this statement merely to the domains of eloquence and rhetorical power.

We have already discussed the miraculous inimitability (*iʿjāz*) of the Qur'an in detail in our commentary on the verse, *And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a chapter like it* (2:23).

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

(10:39) *Rather, they deny that whose knowledge they do not comprehend, and whose fulfilment* (ta'wīl) *has not yet come to them. Those who were before them denied likewise. So observe how was the fate of the wrongdoers!*

This verse explains that the real reason for their disbelief and their claims that the Qur'an is a fabrication is that they reject those parts of it that they have not understood, or they have rejected the Qur'an itself because they have not grasped the knowledge it contains. It contains genuine wisdom and actual sciences that were beyond their comprehension, and whose fulfilment (*ta'wīl*) had not yet reached them, meaning the fulfilment of that which they have denied, which would have left them no choice except to believe in it.

This is the meaning that the context of the verse implies, as the phrase, *and whose explanation has not yet come to them*, points to the Day of Resurrection, as supported by the verse in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf, *Do they await anything but its fulfilment* (ta'wīl)*? The day when its fulfilment comes, those who had forgotten it before will say, 'Our Lord's apostles had certainly brought the truth. If only we had some intercessors to intercede for us, or we*

would be returned, so that we may do differently from what we did!' (7:53).

This confirms the explanation we have given for the earlier verse, *As for those in whose hearts is deviance, they pursue what is metaphorical in it, courting temptation and courting its fulfilment* (ta'wīl). *But no one knows its fulfilment except Allah* (3:7), namely that the meaning of *ta'wīl* in the vocabulary of the Qur'an is the reality upon which an idea depends, whether this is a commandment, a teaching, a story, or some other reality, without this being part of the idea itself, and that the entirety of the Qur'an, and all of the teachings, ordinances, and reports it contains has a *ta'wīl*.[1]

The above reading is also supported by the statement, *those who were before them denied likewise*. By comparing them to those who came before them, the verse suggests that the intended meaning is that those polytheists who came before them also denied what their prophets called them to because they did not comprehend its knowledge and because its fulfilment had not yet come to them. So, just as the other prophets brought parts of the divine call to faith containing teachings and rulings that have a fulfilment, so too do the Qur'an's teachings and rulings have a fulfilment, and this is not limited to the explanation and meanings of its words, as some have presumed.

Therefore, the overall meaning of the verse is that these polytheists, who accuse the Qur'an of being fabricated, are no different from the polytheists and disbelievers of previous nations. This is insofar as, when they were confronted by the divine call to faith, which contained teachings and rulings that they did not fully grasp, this prevented them from having certainty and believing in it. Their ignorance led them to deny it, and the day when the fulfilment of its teachings and the reality of its nature will be revealed to them has not yet come; for this will be a day that will leave them no choice but to have certainty and believe—this day, of course, is the Day of Resurrection. On that day, the veil will be lifted from the visage of the divine realities, revealing them for all to see. Then, these people who denied and did wrong, just like those before them denied and did wrong ... see what became of those past wrongdoers, so you can anticipate what will happen to these wrongdoers today.

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1 See *al-Mīzān* Eng. v. 5 for the explanation of verse, 3:7. Note that the word *ta'wīl* in other volumes has been translated as "interpretation". (Ed.)

This is what careful examination of the verse's meaning yields, and commentators have presented various differing opinions about it depending upon their understanding of the word *ta'wīl*. There is no need to address these opinions here, as we have already examined them previously.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۚ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

(10:40) *Some of them believe in it, and some of them do not believe in it, and your Lord best knows the agents of corruption.*

This verse divides people into two groups: Those who believe in the Qur'an and those who do not. Then, it refers to those who do not believe as 'agents of corruption' (*mufsidīn*), implying that those who deny the teachings of the Qur'an do so because they are agents of corruption.

Therefore, this verse serves to clarify the current state of some believing and some disbelieving, and that disbelief stems from the vice of moral corruption.

Some scholars have offered different explanations of the verse. For instance, there are those who say that the intended meaning is that your people will not be like those wrongdoers before them, who denied their messengers except for a few, and their fate was punishment and eradication. Instead, your people will be divided into two groups, one that believes in this Qur'an and another that never believes in it. However, this explanation is entirely untethered from the actual wording of the verse.

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ ۖ أَنْتُمْ بَرِيئُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

(10:41) *If they deny you, say, 'My deeds belong to me and your deeds belong to you: you are absolved of what I do and I am absolved of what you do.'*

This verse tells the Prophet to disassociate from them if they reject him. Disassociation (*tabarrī*) is one of the stages of supporting the truth (*al-intiṣār li al-ḥaqq*) for those who are striving to revive it. The way to do this is by guiding people to the truth if they are willing to be guided and, if not, to disassociate from them so that they do not press him to follow their falsehood instead.

The latter part of the verse, *you are absolved of what I do and I am absolved of what you do*, explains the meaning of the former part, *my deeds belong to me and your deeds belong to you*.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ ۚ أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(10:42) *There are some of them who prick up their ears at you. But can you make the deaf hear even if they do not apply reason?*

This is a rhetorical question with the force of a denial.

The phrase, *even if they do not apply reason* shows that when God says they are '*deaf*' He is referring to deafness of the heart, because they do not comprehend the significance of what they hear, so it is as though they are actually deaf.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'There are some of them who listen to you, but they are deaf because their heart cannot hear, and you do not have the power to make them hear when they have no hearing.'

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْكَ ۚ أَفَأَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(10:43) *And there are some of them who observe you. But can you guide the blind even if they do not perceive?*

This verse is similar in its meaning to the one before it.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَٰكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

(10:44) *Indeed Allah does not wrong people in the least; rather it is people who wrong themselves.*

Based on the context of the present discussion, this verse makes clear that the deprivation of hearing and sight that these people suffer from, as a result of their deafness and blindness, is a consequence of their own wrongdoing, not because God has wronged them by taking away their hearing and sight. They have only been given what they have brought upon themselves.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَأَنْ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(10:45) ***On the day He will gather them, as if they had not remained except for an hour of the day getting acquainted with one another, they are certainly losers who deny the encounter with Allah, and they are not guided.***

Based on its apparent meaning, we can analyze the grammatical structure of the verse as follows: '*the day*' is an adverbial clause that qualifies the phrase '*they are certainly losers...*'; '*as if they had not remained except for an hour*' is an adverbial clause that qualifies the pronoun '*them*', and '*getting acquainted with one another*' is another adverbial clause that qualifies '*as if they had not remained except for an hour.*'

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'Those who denied the meeting with God have indeed lost on the day when He gathers them all together, and they will consider the life of this world trivial, considering it to have lasted no more than a single hour of the day, and they will recognize one another without rejecting or forgetting each other.'

Some commentators have said that the phrase, '*as if they had not remained*', serves as an adjective for '*the day*' or for an implicit infinitive, whose meaning is indicated by the verb, '*gather*.' Others have said that '*getting acquainted with one another*' is an adjective for '*an hour*.' There are still other unlikely readings of the verse that are not supported by its wording.

In any case, this verse refers back to the discussing of the encounter with God mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and it revolves around what has just been said about the fulfilment (*ta'wīl*) of religious prophecy.

It is as if to say, 'Even though the fulfilment of the Qur'an has not come to them yet, they should not let themselves be deceived by the fixed appearances of this worldly life, thinking that it is long-lasting and its end is far away. After all, they will be mustered with God and they will see clearly that the life of this world is nothing more than a brief enjoyment, and that they did not remain in it except briefly, as if only for an hour of the day, recognizing one another.

When this happens, their loss in denying the meeting with God will become apparent to them, as the fulfilment of the religion comes to them, revealing the truth of the matter, and the light of monotheism becomes manifest. On that day, it will be clear that the Day belongs to God, the One, the All-paramount.

Verses 46–56

These verses inform us of an ongoing divine order of things, namely that God has issued a definitive decree that cannot be repelled or altered to send a messenger to every nation to convey His message. Then He will judge between the messenger and the people with a decisive judgment by sending down punishment upon them, saving the believers and destroying the deniers.

The Prophet is then commanded to inform his people that the same divine order of things that befell previous nations will also befall in their nation, without any exceptions. However, in response to their question about when the punishment would befall them, God did not instruct him to say anything beyond the fact that the decree is inevitable and the nation has a lifespan and an appointed term, just like an individual whose life comes to an end. As for the exact timing of the punishment, it is left ambiguous.

As we have already discussed in relation to the verse, *but Allah will not punish them while you are in their midst, nor will Allah punish them while they plead for forgiveness* (8:33), that the verse implies that the nation will be deprived of the opportunity to plead for forgiveness after the time of the Prophet and that the punishment will then descend upon them. We have also said that the evidence indicates that the verse in Sūrah al-Anfāl is Medinan, so it comes after the Meccan verses we are discussing here as a clarification after ambiguity, and it is one of the Qur'an's prophecies of future events (*malāḥim*).

Some commentators have interpreted the punishment mentioned in these verses as a reference to the punishment of the Hereafter. However, the context of these verses precludes such a reading.

وَإِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِى نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(10:46) *Whether We show you a part of what We promise them, or take you away, their return will be to Us. Then Allah will be*

witness to what they do.

The equivocation between showing the Prophet or taking him away is to signify the equivalence between the two circumstances and to include in all possibilities. Therefore, the meaning is: 'They will return to us no matter what happens.' The use of the particle '*then*' is to signify the logical arrangement of the verse, rather than the temporal arrangement of events (as God is always a witness to what they do). The verse, then, is intended to console the Prophet and to serve as a prelude to a discussion of the decree of divine punishment, which the following verses will elaborate upon.

Therefore, the full meaning of the verse is: 'Take comfort, for we will deliver what we have promised them, whether we show you some of it or we take you away before that, for their affair is to us, and we are witnesses to the deeds of theirs that call down punishment; there are neither hidden from us, nor will we forget them.'

Note the shift in address from direct speech, '*We show you*' to the third person, '*Then Allah will be witness...*'—this is to call attention to the reason for the proposition contained in the verse, namely that God is a witness to all that they do, as befits His utter divinity.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

(10:47) *There is a messenger for every nation; so when their messenger comes, judgment is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged.*

The divine decree consists of two decrees: First, that every single nation has a messenger that brings them God's message and conveys it to them; second, that when this messenger comes to them and conveys this message, they split into those who believe in the message and those who deny it, then God judges between them with justice and fairness without wronging them. This is the meaning yielded by the verse's context.

From this, it becomes clear that the phrase, *so when their messenger comes*, is a succinct expression that leaves much of its meaning implicit: 'So, when their messenger comes to them and conveys God's message to them, his people differ between those who deny his message and those who

believe in it.' This is the meaning indicated by the phrase, *judgment is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged*, because judgment can only be rendered on issues where there is some disagreement. Thus, the question of fairness and the absence of injustice in judgment regarding punishment and harm is what first comes to mind from this verse.

We have already discussed the distinction between a messenger (*rasūl*) and a prophet (*nabī*) in our discussions on prophethood.[1] Therefore, the judgment mentioned in the verse is specific to divine messengership rather than prophecy.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(10:48) *They say, 'When will this promise be fulfilled, should you be truthful?'*

They are asking about the time of this promised judgment, which is the judgment between them in this world. The ones asking this question are some of the idolaters from the time of the Prophet. The evidence for this is that God commands him to respond to them by saying, *'I have no control over any benefit for myself nor any harm except what Allah may wish. There is a time for every nation ...'* (10:49). Some scholars have said that this question is about the punishment due on the Day of Resurrection and that those asking this question are idolaters from previous nations. However, this reading is to be discounted.

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۗ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ۚ إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً ۖ وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

(10:49) *Say, 'I have no control over any benefit for myself nor any harm except what Allah may wish. There is a time for every nation: when their time comes, they shall not defer it by a single hour nor shall they advance it.'*

When they say, '*When will this promise be fulfilled, should you be truthful?*', what they mean is, 'When will your Lord fulfil what He promised you ...' or '... bring about what He promised us, that He will judge between

1 See *al-Mīzān* Eng. v. 3 under the verse 2:213 (Ed.)

us and you, destroy us and save you and the believers with you, clear the atmosphere for you, give you the land, and free you from our evil? Why doesn't He hasten that?' This question is driven by their impatience, as they seek to challenge and ridicule the Muslims, as the following verses indicate, similar to their saying, quoted elsewhere: *Why do you not bring us the angels should you be truthful?* (15:7).

In this verse, God bids His Prophet to begin his answer to the idolaters' questions by making clear that he does not have the power to repel harm or bring benefit even for his own self, let alone the power to hasten what has been promised to them, save whatever power God has granted him. Therefore, the matter is entirely in the hands of God, and their impertinent demand to hasten this judgment and punishment only reveals the depths of their ignorance.

Then, He answers their question about when this promise will take place by avoiding setting a specific time for it and, instead, focusing on its inevitability. This is because the former is a part of the Unseen that is known only to God, and part of His command that only He has control over. This is something He has already called attention to previously in this chapter in the verse, *They say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, 'The Unseen belongs only to Allah. So wait. I too am waiting along with you'* (10:20)

As for the second aspect, which concerns the inevitability of the punishment's occurrence, it is explained through invoking a fundamental principle that is among the general norms prevailing in the universe, by which intricacies are clarified and doubts are dispelled. This principle is that every nation has an appointed time that they cannot exceed or evade, and it will inevitably come to them. When their time comes, their end will neither be delayed nor hastened. This is indicated in the present verse, when God says, *there is a time for every nation: when their time comes, they shall not defer it by a single hour nor shall they advance it.* That is to say, 'You are also a nation among the nations, so you too will inevitably have an appointed time like theirs, and when it comes, you cannot delay it nor hasten it.'

If they understand this statement and reflect upon it, they will realize that for each nation there is a collective life beyond the individual lives of its members, and for their collective life, there is an existence and duration that God Almighty has ordained for them. For each nation, there is their

share of happiness, misery, obligations, guidance, misguidance, reward, and punishment. And the divine governance of the created realm looks after the affairs of nations just as it does those of individuals.

History attests to this fact, as do the traces of their ruined dwellings and abandoned homes that are scattered across the landscape. The Qur'an recounts the stories of some of these nations, such as the people of Noah, the people of Hūd from ʿAḍ, the people of Ṣāliḥ from Thamūd, the people of Abraham from Babylon, the people of Sodom and other cities destroyed with them (who were the people of Lot), the people of Pharaoh from Egypt, and others.

These perished nations have ceased to exist, and their lives have ended. They perished only as a result of divine punishment and destruction, and they were not punished until their messengers had come to them with clear proofs. No messenger came to any of these people without them being divided over the truth that was brought to them, some of them believing in it, and others, who were the majority, denying it.

This shows the Prophet's audience in this nation, having differed over the truth when it came to them, will likewise have God judge between their messenger and themselves. He will seize them with the same fate as the past nations before them, and that God is ever watchful.

A thoughtful reader will note that, although God began by threatening the polytheists with this punishment, He also warned the wrongdoers of it in the course of His speech, making the threat applicable to them as well. This means that there are wrongdoers amongst the Muslims, just as there are amongst other communities, so they too should expect a painful punishment by which God will separate them from His Prophet. They should forget the notion instilled by Satan that their nation is an especially blessed one, and that God has lifted the punishment of this world from them as a special honor to their Prophet, the Prophet of Mercy. They believe they are safe from God's punishment even if they indulge in every sin and transgression and violate every boundary while, in reality, there is no honor attained with God except through piety. God addresses the believers of this nation similarly when He says: *It will be neither after your hopes nor the hopes of the People of the Book: whoever commits evil shall be requited for it, and he will not find for himself any guardian or helper besides Allah* (4:123).

Sometimes, a person might transgress and assume that the punishment of the Hereafter is included within this honor, and they imagine that their good deeds and sins will be forgiven in their nation. Consequently, they believe they have the permission to do as they please in this world, as if God had draped a veil of security over them, and that in the Hereafter, they will only have divine forgiveness and the reward of Paradise.

However, if this were the case, the religion and the divine law would be nothing but a set of arbitrary obligations and rules, a game played by the Lord of the Worlds, who is not questioned about what He does, while those who claim this will be questioned about what they say, for they are ascribing a great falsehood to Him.

All of this stems from turning away from the remembrance of God and neglecting His Book, as the Messenger said, *And the Messenger will say, 'O my Lord! Indeed my people consigned this Qur'an to oblivion.'* (25:30)

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُهُ بَيَاتًا أَوْ نَهَارًا مَاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ
الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ أَثُمَّ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ آلْآنَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

(10:50–51) *Say, 'Tell me, should His punishment overtake you by night* (bayātan) *or day; so what part of it do the guilty seek to hasten?' 'What! Do you believe it when it has befallen? Now? While you would seek to hasten it?!'*

The term *bayātan* means 'by night' (like *laylan*), but it is most commonly used in the context of some harm coming to someone, such as coming under attack by one's enemies.

When they said, *'When will this promise be fulfilled, should you be truthful?'* (10:48), this showed that they were seeking to hasten the divine punishment that would force them to believe. Therefore, after expounding the inevitability of this punishment, God reproaches and condemns them from two angles. First, He reprimands them for seeking to hasten the punishment, which is a sudden, unexpected event that humans should be afraid of, rather than hastening it. God instructs His Prophet to say, *'Tell me, should His punishment overtake you by night or day; so what part of it do the guilty seek to hasten?'* In other words, why are you hastening this punishment when you are wrongdoers who cannot escape it when it arrives?

In the phrase, '*... so what part of it do the guilty seek to hasten?*', there is

a shift from addressing them directly to speaking about them in the third person. This shift reflects their state of not explicitly uttering something evil and also alludes to the reason that the punishment will be brought upon them, which is their guilt and wrongdoing. Secondly, God reprimands them for delaying their belief until a time when it would no longer benefit them, which is when the punishment comes. The divine punishment would undoubtedly force them to believe, as it is a known fact that humans tend to believe when faced with destruction. On the other hand, belief is a form of repentance, and repentance is not accepted when the signs of divine punishment becomes manifest and death is imminent.

God says, *Do you believe it when it has befallen?*, meaning when the punishment comes, would you only then believe in the Qur'an, the religion, or God? *Now?*—meaning, would you believe in it at that moment and time when you used to hasten it? The implication of their hastening the punishment is their lack of concern for its consequences and mocking it.

ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

(10:52) ***Then it will be said to those who were wrongdoers, 'Taste the everlasting punishment. Shall you be requited except for what you used to earn?'***

This verse appears to be connected to the previous one, *There is a time for every nation* (10:48). In this case, the first verse clarifies the certainty of the punishment befalling them and their destruction, while the second verse clarifies that after the punishment and destruction, it will be said to them, *Taste the everlasting punishment*, which is the punishment of the Hereafter, and that they will only be recompensed for the deeds they had earned and the sins they had committed. The statement is a figurative expression of the punishment encompassing them and reaching them. In this context, the two verses, *Say, 'Tell me, should His punishment overtake you by night or day... While you would seek to hasten it?!'* (10:50-51), are an interjection.

وَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَكَ أَحَقٌّ هُوَ ۖ قُلْ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ ۖ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

(10:53) *They inquire of you, 'Is it true?' Say, 'Yes! By my Lord, it is indeed true, and you cannot thwart.'*

Based on the context, the pronoun, 'it' in their question, '*Is it true?*' refers to God's judgment or to divine punishment, but the significance is one and the same. Here, God tells His Prophet to affirm it from all angles. In other words, respond to them by telling them that it will inevitably occur and that there is no obstacle to it.

So, when God says, *Say, 'Yes! By my Lord, it is indeed true* (innahu la-ḥaqun)*...'*, this is affirming that it will indeed come to pass, and this is emphasized by the use of an oath ('*By my Lord...*'), the use of the particles of emphasis, *inna* and *lām* in '*it is indeed true*.'

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۗ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ
لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۖ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

(10:54) *Were any soul that has done wrong to possess whatever there is on the earth, it would surely offer it for ransom. They will hide their remorse when they sight the punishment; and judgment will be made between them with justice and they will not be wronged.*

This verse highlights the severity of the punishment and the importance of escaping it for those who have committed wrong. It is also that the wrongdoers will feel regret, which they conceal out of fear of ridicule or similar reasons. The apparent meaning is that the decree and punishment mentioned in the verse refer to the worldly decree and punishment, not anything else, such as punishment of the Hereafter.

أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَٰكِنَّ
أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

(10:55) *Look! To Allah indeed belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Look! Allah's promise is indeed true; but most of them do not know.*

This verse and what follows are a rational argument for the aforementioned punishment as being both true and inevitable, with nothing able to

prevent it. Since everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God alone, with no partner, all control over them is solely attributed to God. No one else has any control over anything except with His permission. When He exercises control over something, it is based solely on His will, without being bound to any external requirement or restriction. Thus, God does what He wills without being tied to external conditions or impeded by any obstacles. When He wills something, He does it without any hindrance or obstruction, and when He makes a promise, it is true and cannot be averted. His promise will not change due to any external factor.

Deep reflection on God's absolute and true sovereignty over all things leads one to realize that His promise is necessarily true and unadulterated by falsehood. However, most people, who are the majority of humankind, do not know this due to their inability to deeply engage in these metaphysical investigations or their fascination with simplistic understanding and following the path of the majority.

Thus, they compare God's sovereignty to the sovereignty of the great and powerful human rulers.[1] They see that one of their great leaders has been granted authority and power, without anyone to compete with him, and seeing absolute power in him to do as he pleases and rule as he desires. Then, they may find that he harbors ambitions and strives for them, yet what he aims to do or promises does not materialise, either because it is not in his personal interest or the interest of others, or due to an external impediment. Then, they compare God's command to human commands, and His promise to the human promises, believing that a promise, according to them, can either be realized in external reality or not come about at all.

Although the essential meaning of this ruler's dominion, authority, the vastness of his power, and the influence of his will is that people believe in it and perceive him as great among them, even if the vicissitudes of time will one day wear him down, destroy him, or people's beliefs might change due to reasons that deprive him of his power and authority. The meaning of achieving what he wants or desires is that the external causes have helped him in achieving this and in realizing his desires. If these external causes did not help him or assist him in his aims, he would not be able to

1 This is an example of anthropomorphism which means comparing God to something else. (Ed.)

force these forces to submit to the power he has arrogated to himself, just as they do not submit to his desires on matters such as death, life, youth, old age, health, illness, and many other matters. Therefore, he has no control over anything.

By contrast, God has dominion over His creation in the sense that the existence of everything depends on Him, is created and disposed by His command, and is subject to His will. Whatever control is exercised over anything, it is done by Him alone, not due to any external condition or the absence of an obstacle hindering His action. Nothing is attributed to Him or anyone else except by His leave, to the extent that He allows. So how can anything deviate from His will and devolve to someone else, when there is no one else for it to devolve to or be attributed to?

God's actions necessarily indicate His intent, so how can falsehood, which is external to His nature, be attributed to Him, when there is no falsehood in the external reality? Falsehood and error are related to mental concepts in terms of their applicability to the external world. How can his promise be false when His promise to us is His future action, unseen to us, and he has directed all the causes towards it, and there is no turning back?

Deep reflection on these truths will enlighten the inquisitive and contemplative person about the meaning of God's dominion over whatever is in the heavens and the earth and that it necessarily implies that God's promise is true. Doubt about this fact can arise only out of ignorance of His exalted position. Therefore, God says, *Look! To Allah indeed belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth* (10:55), then follows it with a statement that functions as a conclusion, *Look! Allah's promise is indeed true*. Then he adds, ... *but most of them do not know*. After this, He expounds the meaning of His dominion with the statement in the following verse, *It is He who gives life and brings death* (10:56).

هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

(10:56) *It is He who gives life and brings death, and to Him you shall be brought back.*

This argument builds upon what was mentioned in the previous verse about God's dominion with respect to humankind. It is as though He is saying: 'All your affairs, including life, death, and return, are under His

control. So how can you not be under His dominion?'

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, *Say, 'Tell me, should His punishment overtake you by night or day; so what part of it do the guilty seek to hasten?'* (10:50): 'This punishment will descend during the End Times upon the sinners amongst the People of the Qibla, and they deny that the punishment will descend upon them.'

Author's comment: This narration is supported by the previous verses and our exposition of them.

(2) It is narrated from al-Ḥasan b. Mūsa al-Kashshāb, from a man, from Ḥammād b. 'Īsā, from his narrator, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, that he was asked about the verse, *they will hide their remorse when they sight the punishment* (10:54): 'How will concealing their remorse benefit them when they are being punished?' He said: 'They do not wish to be ridiculed by their enemies.' (ibid.)

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Verses 57–70

This section of verses once again turns to describing the Qur'an with its noble attributes, followed by scattered discussions connected to previous topics within the aims of the chapter. These verses contain admonitions, wisdom, and arguments for various issues, as well as descriptions of God's allies (*awliyā'*) and conveys glad tidings to them.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(10:57) *O mankind! There has certainly come to you an advice* (mawʿiẓa) *from your Lord, and a cure for what is in the breasts* (ṣudūr)*, and a guidance* (hudan) *and mercy* (raḥma) *for the faithful.*

Al-Rāghib says in his *Mufradāt*: '*Waʿẓ* (from whence *mawʿiẓa* is derived) means deterrence combined with a threat.' Al-Khalīl writes: 'It is an admonition to goodness that softens the heart.'

The meaning of *ṣadr* is well known and, since the heart is situated in the breast, and people believed that a person perceives and understands matters through it—including love, hatred, desire, aversion, longing, hope, and wishes—consider the chest to be a storehouse for the secrets of the heart and the spiritual qualities within the individual, whether virtues or vices. Virtues foster the health of the heart and its uprightness, while vices entail its sickness and disease. One might say, 'I have cured my breast with such-and-such', meaning that they have removed the distress and tightness in their chest with it. One might also say, 'I have cured my heart.' Therefore, to cure one's breast or what it contains is a figure of speech for removing from it the spiritual vices that immiserate the human being, deprive him of a happy life, and deny him the good of this world and the hereafter.

According to al-Rāghib, *hudā* ('guidance') means to point someone to their desired goal with kindness, and we have already discussed the meaning of this at length in our commentary on the verse, *Whomever Allah desires*

to guide, He opens his breast to Islam (6:125).

The term *raḥma* ('mercy') denotes a special effect on the heart that is engendered by seeing another person in need or experiencing suffering, which motivates the one who has this feeling to come to their aid and meet their needs. When attributed to God, 'mercy' signifies the outcome rather than the origin of the effect, as He is exalted above such sentiments. In this case, it applies to the totality of His bestowal of gifts to humankind and His granting of existence to all creation.

As for God's gifts, when these are attributed to the entirety of creation, they refer to whatever is granted to Him in terms of their existence, their sustenance, and all the uncountable blessings He bestows upon them: *If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful* (16:18). When these gifts are attributed specifically to the believers, it refers to the various aspects of human happiness that God bestows upon them, such as true knowledge, noble morals, righteous deeds, and a good life in this world and the hereafter, as well as Paradise and His satisfaction (*riḍwān*).

Thus, when the Qur'an is described as a 'mercy for the believers', this means that it envelops them with the various forms of goodness and blessings that God has instilled within it for those who truly understand its realities and embrace its teachings. God says, *We send down in the Qur'an that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss* (17:82).

If we consider the four attributes that God has ascribed to the Qur'an in the present verse—namely, that it is an admonition, a cure for what is in the breasts, a guidance, and a mercy—and compare these to one other, then this verse serves as a comprehensive exposition of the Qur'an's beautiful, wholesome effects and the pure, untainted knowledge that is instilled in the souls of the believers from the moment it reaches their ears until it takes root in their souls and settles in their hearts.

The Qur'an first reaches the believers while they are enveloped by heedlessness and beset by confusion, which have caused their inner selves to be filled with the darkness of doubt and scepticism, and their hearts to be afflicted with the diseases of vices and all sorts of wicked and despicable states. This being their condition, the Qur'an delivers a beautiful admonition to them that awakens them from the slumber of heedlessness,

dissuades them from their evil habits and bad deeds, and directs them instead towards goodness and happiness.

After this, it sets about purifying their inner selves from the impurities of vices and negative moral attributes, and it continues to remove the afflictions of their minds and cure the diseases of their hearts one after another until they are all gone.

After this, it gently guides them to true knowledge, noble morals, and righteous deeds, elevating them step by step and drawing them closer to the ranks of the ones brought near to God (*al-muqarrabūn*), until they finally settle among them and achieve the success reserved for those who are sincerely devoted to Him.

Finally, it clothes them in the garments of mercy, settles them in the abode of honor, and grants them the joy of being in the company of prophets, truthful ones, witnesses, and the righteous—an excellent company indeed. It admits them into the ranks of God's closest servants who are lodged in the highest of the heavens.

Therefore, the Qur'an is simultaneously an admonisher, a cure for what is in the chests, a guide to the straight path, and a provider of mercy by the leave of God, the Exalted. It admonishes, cures the chests, guides, and bestows mercy by virtue of its own essence, not because of anything external to it, as it is the direct connection between God and His creation. Thus, it is an admonition, a cure for what is in the chests, guidance, and mercy for the believers. Understand this.

God begins the verse by saying, *O mankind!*, which shows that it is addressed to all of humanity, and not only polytheists or only to the idolaters of Mecca, even if the verse occurs within the context of a discourse with them. This is because the attributes mentioned in this verse— *There has certainly come to you an advice from your Lord, and a cure for what is in the breasts, and a guidance and mercy for the faithful*—relate to all human beings, and not only a specific group of them.

Therefore, it is strange indeed to see that some scholars have said that the meaning of 'mercy' in this verse is the mercy and amiability that the faithful show to one another, as this is manifestly at odds with the context in which the verse occurs.

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(10:58) *Say, 'In Allah's grace and in His mercy* (bi faḍl Allāh wa bi raḥmatihi)*—let them rejoice in that! It is better than what they amass.'*

The word *faḍl* ('grace') literally means an excess of something, and a gift is called a *faḍl* because when someone gives some property as a gift it is because they have no need of it. Therefore, when the Qur'an refers to what God bestows upon His servants as a *faḍl*, this is an allusion to His bounteousness and the fact that He has no need of anything that He bestows on others, nor any need from those upon whom He bestows His gifts.

It is not far-fetched to assume that in using the word '*grace*', the Qur'an is referring to what God bestows upon His creation in general, and by '*mercy*', it is referring to the blessings He bestows upon the faithful in particular. For when religious happiness, in the form of divine mercy, is combined with the general blessings of life, sustenance, and other common blessings, the sum of these two becomes even more worthy of feelings of joy, happiness, and delight.

Support for this reading of the verse can be found in the phrase, '*In Allah's grace and in His mercy*', where the preposition *bi* ('in')—signifying causation—is repeated before both *grace* and *mercy*, indicating that each of these is an independent cause. Then, the second phrase '*let them rejoice in that*' combines the two, suggesting that the sum of both merits human happiness.

It is also possible that the term *faḍl* signifies other blessings besides mercy, such as those mentioned in the previous verse, like admonition, a cure for what is in the chests, and guidance. By the same token, the '*mercy*' mentioned here refers to the same '*mercy*' mentioned in the previous verse, which is the special divine gift that brings happiness in this life and the hereafter.

The meaning, according to this explanation, is that the blessings God has favored them with—in the form of moral admonition, a cure for what is in the chests, and guidance, as well as the mercy He grants to the believers in the form of a good life—are more deserving of their joy and happiness than the wealth they accumulate in the course of their worldly lives.

This view might be supported by His saying, *Were it not for Allah's grace and His mercy upon you, not one of you would ever be pure. But Allah purifies whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing* (24:21).

Here, their purification is attributed to both God's grace and His mercy. However, associating this purification with God's grace in the sense of a general blessing is far removed from the proper understanding of the verse. This view is also supported by the fact it coheres with what has been reported in various narrations which have interpreted the verse as a reference to the Prophet, ʿAlī, or the Qur'an, which will be discussed further below.

Regarding the phrase, *let them rejoice in that* (fa bidhālik fal-yafraḥūn), scholars have pointed out that the use of the preposition *fa* is similar to a poet's saying, 'So if I am killed, then, at that, be alarmed (*fa idhā qutiltu faʿinda dhālik fajzaʿī*).' The adverbial phrase, *in that*, refers back to *Allah's grace and in His mercy* and is the object of *let them rejoice*. It is placed before the latter phrase to signify exclusivity (in other words: 'in only that, let them rejoice'). The passage, *it is better than what they amass* serves as a further clarification of why they should only rejoice in that.

From the above, it is evident that this verse follows on from the message of the previous one. When God addresses the people, He mentions His grace upon them by stating that the Qur'an is an admonition for them, a cure for what is in their chests, and guidance and mercy for the believers among them. Hence, it is fitting that they should rejoice for this blessing, manifested in God's grace and mercy, rather than for the wealth they accumulate in their worldly lives. This is because the former, upon which their happiness in both this life and the next depends, is better than wealth, which is nothing but a trial that may lead to their destruction and misery in both this world and the next.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِنْهُ حَرَامًا وَحَلَالًا قُلْ آللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ ۖ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(10:59) *Say, 'Have you regarded what Allah has sent down for you of provision, whereupon you made some of it unlawful and lawful?' Say, 'Did Allah give you the sanction, or do you fabricate a lie against Allah?'*

Provision (*rizq*), which refers to those earthly matters that sustain human life, such as food, drink, clothing, and other necessities, is attributed to being sent down based on a reality affirmed by the Qur'an. This reality

is that all these things originate in the treasure houses that exist with God, and they descend from there according to what God has determined. He says, *There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure* (15:21). Elsewhere, He says, *And in the sky is your provision and what you are promised* (51:22). Consider also the verses, *and He has sent down for you eight mates of the cattle*, and *and We sent down iron* (57:25).

As for the view that the expression 'sent down' refers to the fact that people's sustenance comes from the rain which God sends down from the sky, this is a simplistic explanation that does not apply to all the instances in which the Qur'an uses the expression 'sent down' in connection with various forms of provision, as in the case of cattle and iron. The sustenance mentioned in the verse that God has sent down to them, which the idolaters have made lawful and unlawful, refers to cattle such as camels, sheep, and other animals, which they assigned special religious significance to and called *waṣīla*, *sā'iba*, *ḥām*, and the like.

The proposition 'for' (*la*) in the phrase 'for you' (*la-kum*) is purposive and suggests the meaning of 'benefit', meaning that God sent it down for your sake and for you to benefit from it. It does not denote a direct object, as the verb 'to send down' (*inzāl*) can only become transitive through the prepositions *'alā* (lit. 'on') or *ilā* (lit. 'to'). Based on this, the passage implies permissibility and making things lawful, meaning that God sent these things down and made them lawful. This is the reason why 'unlawful' is mentioned before 'lawful' in the passage, whereupon you made some of it unlawful and lawful. God made it lawful by sending it down as a form of sustenance to benefit you and help you live and survive, but then you divided it into two categories of your own making, saying that some parts of it were unlawful and others lawful. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'Say to them, O Muḥammad: "Tell me about the lawful sustenance that God has sent down for your benefit, which you have divided into two categories, making some of it unlawful and some of it lawful—what is the basis for that? Clearly this is something you have fabricated against God without His permission."'

Say, 'Did Allah give you the sanction, or do you fabricate a lie against Allah?': This questions them about the reason behind their division of sustenance into categories of lawful and unlawful. Since it is clear that they

have not done this by God's permission, as they have no connection with Him through either revelation or a messenger, it is necessarily a fabrication. Therefore, this is a rhetorical question that is supposed to affirm that they did indeed fabricate a lie against God and to rebuke and condemn them for doing so.

At first glance, the question posed in the verse does not appear to exhaust all the possibilities. For, while it is possible for their division of God's sustenance into unlawful and lawful to be either by God's permission or a fabrication against Him, it is also not possible for it to be based on some benefit they perceived or claimed to exist in doing so, or due to their own desires, without attributing it to God, and therefore not making it a fabrication against Him.

From another angle, however, the question posed in the verse, which contrasts God's permission with fabricating something against Him, suggests that the right to declare something lawful or unlawful belongs only to God. In other words, to deem some sustenance unlawful and some sustenance lawful, which was common amongst them, can only be one of two things: either it is from God or it is a fabrication against Him. At first glance, this may seem debatable, as many of the customs that are common amongst people are rooted in their communal habits or national traditions, among other things.

However, a deep reflection on God's words and a thorough investigation dispels this notion, as the Qur'an asserts that judgment belongs to God alone. None of His creation has the right to initiate legislation or establish rules in human society, as He says, *Sovereignty belongs only to Allah* (12:40).

God has alluded to the reason for this in the verse, *So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion...* (30:30). From this, it becomes clear that the idea of judgment and sovereignty belong to God alone is in accordance with the nature of creation and humankind's natural disposition, conforming to these without contradicting what can be derived from the nature of the cosmos and existence as a whole. This is because God did not create the creation in vain, as He has said elsewhere, *Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly ...?* (23:115). On the contrary, God created humankind with an ultimate purpose and a teleological goal, which they strive for in accordance

with their innate disposition and move towards following their natural instincts, using the means and tools that God has provided, the guidance He has inspired them with, on the way He has laid out for them: *Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it* (20:50), *Then He made the way easy for him* (80:20).

Therefore, the existence of things at the outset of their creation is suitable for the state of perfection that has been designated for them, and they are equipped with the abilities and means to reach their ultimate goals. Nothing can flourish and attain its intended perfection (*kamāl*) except through acquiring moral traits and deeds. Therefore, it is necessary that religion, meaning the laws governing acquired moral traits and deeds, align with the human being's created nature and innate disposition, for his innate disposition does not forget its purpose, nor does it deviate from it. It is not inclined towards action nor deterred from action except due to what it has been equipped for, and the equipment with which the human has been furnished calls for nothing other than the purpose for which it was prepared, which is the ultimate goal of humanity.

As human beings are equipped with the systems of nourishment and procreation, they judge, according to the religion of their innate disposition (*dīn al-fiṭra*), that they should seek out nourishment and procreation, rather than asceticism or monasticism, for example. Since humans are naturally inclined towards social interaction and cooperation, they also judge that they should participate with others in their society and engage in social activities, and so on and so forth.

Therefore, what is needed for human beings in terms of moral judgments and laws is what the cosmic order, of which they are an insignificant part, calls them to. Their existence has been furnished with the means to guide them towards their state of natural perfection. This cosmic order, with its interconnected parts is the vehicle of God's will and carries within it the natural law of innate human nature (*al-sharīʿa al-fiṭriyya al-insāniyya*) and calls them to the true religion of God.

Now, the true religion is the judgment of God and there is no judgment aside from His. This is in accordance with the divine nature of creation, and any judgment besides His is necessarily a falsehood and, as such, it will only lead humans toward misery and destruction and guide them to nothing but the torment of the blazing fire.

Based on the above, we can resolve the two issues we previously identified. Since judgment belongs to God alone, every rule circulating among people is either a true judgment from God, derived from revelation or a divine message, or a false judgment that has been attributed to God. There is no third category or middle ground.

However, the polytheists used to attribute the judgments that they invented and established among themselves to God. We can see this clearly in the verse, *When they commit an indecency, they say, 'We found our fathers practicing it, and Allah has enjoined it upon us.' Say, 'Indeed Allah does not enjoin indecencies. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?'* (7:28).

وَمَا ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

(10:60) ***What is the idea of those who fabricate lies against Allah on the Day of Resurrection? Indeed Allah is gracious to mankind, but most of them do not give thanks.***

Since the answer to the preceding question, *Did Allah give you the sanction, or do you fabricate a lie against Allah?* is already known, which is that they have fabricated a lie against God, the present verse emphasizes the enormity and severity of the consequences of this. Indeed, it is a fabrication against God, and fabrication obviously is a grave sin. Therefore, it will inevitably bring about a negative effect. Therefore, God delivers the warning, *What is the idea of those who fabricate lies against Allah on the Day of Resurrection?*

When God says, *Indeed Allah is gracious* (dhū faḍl) *to mankind, but most of them do not give thanks*, this is intended as a complaint and a rebuke that highlights what people have become accustomed to, namely their ingratitude for God's blessings and their failure to give thanks for His gifts and bounties. The meaning of *faḍl* ('grace') here is God's provision for humankind, as the earlier verse mentions the sustenance that God has sent down to them, which is a form of divine grace, and how they declared some of it unlawful, which reveals their ingratitude and lack of appreciation of this grace.

By connecting the end of the verse to its beginning, their act of fabricating lies against God is held up as yet another example of their ungratefulness

for His blessings. The meaning is: God is gracious and generous to people, but most of them are ungrateful for His blessings and gifts. So, what will be the thoughts of those who, by declaring some of His sustenance unlawful, spurn God's blessings and fabricate lies against Him, when they face the reality of their deeds on the Day of Resurrection?

وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُو مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَٰلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٦١﴾

(10:61) *You do not engage in any work* (sha'n)*, neither do you recite any part of the Qur'an, nor do you perform any deed without Our being witness over you when you are engaged therein* (idh tufīḍūn fī-hi)*. Not an atom's weight escapes your Lord in the earth or in the sky, nor anything smaller than that nor bigger, but it is in a manifest Book.*

According to al-Rāghib: 'The word *sha'n* refers to some state or matter that comes about and is beneficial, and it is only used for important situations and affairs. For example, God says, *Every day He is engaged in some work* (55:29).'

... neither do you recite anything from Him (min-hu) *of the Qur'an* (min al-Qur'ān)*:* It appears that the Arabic pronoun *hu* in *min-hu* (translated as 'from Him') refers to God. The first preposition *min* ('from') conveys the concept of 'beginning' or 'origin', while the second preposition *min* ('of') is for clarification. Therefore, the meaning is: 'You do not read any part of the Qur'an that has emanated from God and been sent down from Him.' *Ifāḍa* ('to be engaged in something', from whence *tufīḍūn* is derived) means to be completely absorbed in an activity or pursuit.

Notice that the phrase, *... without Our being witness over you ...*, represents a transition from God speaking about Himself in the third person in the previous verse (*Indeed Allah is gracious to mankind*) to Him directly addressing the Qur'an's audience in this one. The subtle point this conveys is the abundance of witnesses that God has at His disposal, as God has witnesses over people's deeds from both among the angels and among

the people, and God encompasses them in turn. This is in the same fashion as important people speak about themselves and others (using what is termed in English 'the royal "we"') to indicate that they have supporters and servants working on their behalf.

It should not be overlooked that this shift in address actually begins from the beginning of the verse. The previous verses were addressed to the Prophet, criticizing the polytheists while speaking about them in their absence and addressing them through an intermediary by telling the Prophet what to say to them (for example, *Say, 'Have you regarded ...?'* 10:59), but at the same time not communicating anything to the Prophet that is specific to his person. This verse shifts the focus of the speech, first to speak to the Prophet individually, by speaking to him about himself by saying, *You do not engage in any work, neither do you recite anything from Him of the Qur'an...* (all of the instances of the pronoun 'you' in this passage are singular), then it shifts again to include him, the polytheists, and all others in a single address by saying, *nor do you* (plural) *perform any deed without Our being witness over you* (plural). This joins them with the Prophet while they are absent and extends the address to everyone via a form of inclusion (*taghlīb*), as if to say, 'You and your people do such-and-such.'

The evidence that the address in this passage is a form of inclusion is what God says next, namely, *Not an atom's weight escapes your* (singular) *Lord in the earth or in the sky*, where the pronoun 'you' is once again singular and shows that God has returned to speaking to His Prophet individually.

In any case, the purpose of the aforementioned shift in the verse's address is to show that God's absolute sovereignty and all-encompassing nature are manifested through His witnessing and knowing the deeds of His creatures in the most complete way from all aspects, without excluding anyone, whether they are a prophet, a believer, or an idolater, and without overlooking so much as a single deed. So, no one should imagine that God is unaware of any of the matters they are engaged in or that He will not hold them accountable for these on the Day of Resurrection. This should be their idea about their Lord on the Day of Resurrection, so, the verse says, let them be wary!

The fact that the verse mentions the recitation of the Qur'an separately, even though it could be included in the phrase immediately prior to it, *you*

do not engage in any work, as this is surely part of the Prophet's work, is to highlight its importance and God's special concern for it.

In the verse, firstly, there is a reinforcement of the admonition to the Prophet and his nation, and, secondly, an emphasis that whatever parts of the Qur'an the Prophet recites to the people is a revelation from God, and His words are not subject to change or falsehood, neither in receiving it from God nor in reciting it to the people—it is always '*from Him*.' Therefore, the verse is in a similar vein to His saying, *Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except to a messenger He approves of. Then He dispatches a sentinel before and behind him so that He may ascertain that they have communicated the messages of their Lord* (72:26-28)).

Not an atom's weight escapes your Lord: This means in terms of absence, distance, or concealment. It shows that all things are eternally present with Him, never concealed from Him, and they are preserved in a record that will never fade. We have discussed this further in our commentary on the verse, "*With Him are the treasures of the Unseen* (6:59).

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

(10:62–63) ***Look! The allies of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve—Those who have faith, and were Godwary.***

This represents the beginning of a new statement, but it is related to the primary objective of this chapter of the Qur'an, which is the call people to believe in the Book of God and encourage them to affirm God's oneness in its most expansive sense.

To emphasize the importance of the matter, it starts with the attention-grabbing term, '*Look!*' In this verse and the following two verses, God mentions His allies, identifies them, describes the signs of their allegiance to Him, and details the specific qualities they possess.

Although the term *wilāya* ('allegiance') has many meanings, its original meaning is the elimination of any barrier between two things so that there is nothing between them that is not part of them. It is then metaphorically used for the closeness of one thing to another in various ways, such as closeness in familial relation, place, rank, friendship, or otherwise. That is why the term *walī* ('ally') is used for both parties of the *wilāya*

relationship, showing that it is reciprocal, especially considering that each of them takes care of the other in a way that no one else does. God is the ally of His believing servant because He takes charge of their affairs and looks after their well-being by guiding them to His straight path, commanding and forbidding what is appropriate or inappropriate for them, and supporting them in this worldly life and the Hereafter.

In any case, the true believer is an ally of his Lord because he obeys Him in His commands and prohibitions, and receives various spiritual blessings from Him, such as guidance, success, support, and direction, as well as the honor of being granted Paradise and His pleasure.

The allies of God, in any case, are the believers, as God proclaims Himself an ally to them in their spiritual lives, as He says: *and Allah is the ally of the faithful* (3:68).

However, the following verse, which explains the term further, stops short of saying this *wilāya* includes all believers, especially those about whom God says, "*And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him* (12:106). The verse, *Those who have faith, and were Godwary* (10:63) identifies God's allies by the traits of faith and Godwariness, indicating that they were in a state of continuous Godwariness before they attained faith, as the verse says 'have faith' (*āmanū*, which is in the perfect tense), and 'were Godwary' (*kānū yattqūn*, which is in the past continuous tense). This shows that they were continuously Godwary before achieving their faith, and it is known that a person's initial belief is not preceded by Godwariness, but rather that the two come together, or that they believe before becoming Godwary, especially if we are talking about continuous Godwariness.

Therefore, the intended meaning of this faith (*īmān*) here is another level of the stages of faith, different from the first stage of it (which has been translated as 'initial belief' in the previous passage). We have already discussed previously that the terms faith (*īmān*), Islam or submission (*islām*), polytheism (*shirk*), and disbelief (*kufr*) each have different levels, some of which are above others. The first stage of Islam is uttering the two testimonies of faith verbally and submitting to its teachings outwardly. This is followed by the first stage of faith, which is the acceptance of the content of the two testimonies in the heart, generally, even if one does not submit to all of the doctrines of the religion as true beliefs. Therefore, it

is possible for some aspects of polytheism to endure and coexist with this belief, which is what is meant by the verse, *And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him* (12:106)

The submission of a servant continues to be refined and develop until this submission to God encompasses every aspect of his life and leads him to refer every affair back to Him. As a servant's submission to God rises in degree and ascends in rank, the corresponding level of faith to this is his acceptance of the implications of that rank, until the servant truly submits to his Lord, realizes the full meaning of His divinity, and ceases any and all resistance or protestation against Him. Thus, the servant neither resents anything that He commands, nor objects to anything in that He wills. This faith is rooted in an abiding certainty about God and all that is related to Him in terms of His authority—this is complete faith, through which a servant's devotion to God is perfected and fully realized.

God says, *But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission* (4:65). It is most likely that this level of faith, or something close to it, is the intended meaning of the verse when it says, *those who have faith, and were Godwary*, because this is preceded by continuous Godwariness rather than the initial level of belief.

The fact that God says that these believers *will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve* (10:62) also indicates that what is meant here is a higher level of faith, with which the meaning of servanthood and submission are fully realized in the servant. This is because such a servant sees that all dominion belongs solely to God, without any partner, and that they have no authority over anything, such that they should either fear its loss or grieve over it.

This is because fear only arises in the soul when it anticipates harm to itself, and grief occurs when it loses something it loves or when it experiences something it dislikes, or when something brings benefits or harm to it. This does not apply to things that have no connection to the person. A person does not fear for something nor grieve over its loss if it has no connection to them. Hence, the one who sees absolutely everything as falling within the dominion of God and knows that He does not share His dominion with anyone, does not see even themselves as having any claim or right over anything. Therefore, they neither fear nor grieve. This is the characteristic of God's allies when He says, *Look! The allies of Allah will*

indeed have no fear nor will they grieve (Qur'an 10:62). These people do not fear anything nor grieve over anything, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter, except what God wills. God has willed that they fear their Lord and grieve for what they may miss from His honor if they fail to grasp it, and this is all part of submission to God.

The general scope of the verse implies that the allies of God are characterized by these two qualities: no fear and no grief whether in this world or the Hereafter. As for the likes of God's statement, *On that day, friends will be one another's enemies, except for the Godwary. 'O My servants! Today you will have no fear, nor will you grieve. Those who believed in Our signs and had been Muslims* (43:68–69). The apparent meaning of these verses is that they refer to God's allies who are being described in the verse presently under discussion. However, one difference between the two descriptions is that affirming the absence of fear and grief for them on the Day of Resurrection does not necessarily mean they do not experience these emotions at other times. Still another difference is in the purity of God's blessings and honors, whose perfection will be realized on the Day of Resurrection, while they may be mixed with other things and not necessarily pure at other times.

This is akin to what we read in the verses, *Indeed those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah!' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, 'Do not fear, nor be grieved! Receive the good news of the paradise which you have been promised. We are your allies in the life of this world and in the Hereafter* (41:30–31).

While the verses seem to indicate that these greetings and glad tidings are delivered on the day that they die because of the phrase, *receive the good news of the paradise which you have been promised*, just because this is what will be said to them when they die, it does not mean it will not be said to them at any other time.

This is what the verse suggests according to its general wording and from its comparison with other verses. Based on other verses discussing the Hereafter, most interpreters have limited the scope of the phrase, *the allies of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve*, to the Day of Death and to the Resurrection. However, in doing so, they have overlooked the particularity of the phrase, *those who have faith, and were Godwary*, and have taken faith and Godwariness as two concurrent matters, leading to

the meaning that the allies of God are the God-fearing among the faithful, and they shall not fear in the Hereafter nor grieve. However, as the judicious reader will no doubt have noticed, this is an arbitrary limitation of its meaning, as there is nothing in the verse to indicate its restriction thus.

Some other scholars have generalized the absence of fear and grief by saying that the allies of God are characterized by this absence in both the worldly life and the Hereafter. However, they have distorted the meaning from another angle, saying that the allies meant here, as explained by the second verse, are all the God-fearing among the believers. What is meant by their lack of fear and grief is that they do not fear in the Hereafter what the disbelievers, sinners, and wrongdoers fear from the terrors of standing before God, the anguish of the Final Judgement, and the punishment of the Hereafter, nor do they grieve for what they have left behind. Equally, they do not fear things in their worldly existence like the disbelievers' do nor grieve for what they grieve.

These scholars have said concerning the origins of fear and grief that these are part and parcel of the human condition, which no one can escape in this world. However, righteous believers are the most patient and content with God's decrees, believing and knowing that if they are tested with something that causes fear or grief, it is actually a form of nurturing to guide their souls towards perfection and purify them through striving in His way, which increases their reward, as many verses have explicitly stated.

However, to critique this view, way say: As for limiting the verse to the absence of the kind of fear and grief that affects the disbelievers, but not the believers in general, and justifying this, saying it is part of human nature and supported by numerous verses, this places arbitrary limitations on the scope of the verse, without there being any textual basis for these. And as for claiming that fear and grief are things which no one can ever escape, this view shows that its proponents have not delved deeply into the study of divine ethics and the spiritual stations that human beings can achieve. As a result, they compare the honored servants of God, such as His nearmost prophets and allies, to the average state of ordinary people. Therefore, it is assumed that these general traits, which are called the natural state of human beings, must also inevitably affect the elect of His servants. This appears to assume that whatever is impossible or difficult for an ordinary person is likewise impossible for those who have attained

the heights of human flourishing. But, if this were really the case, then the spiritual stations and levels on the path to the Ultimate Reality would be nothing more than empty names, without any reality behind them, matters of social convention no different from the imaginary ranks and formal social classes that we use in our societies for the sake of societal interests.

Proponents of this view have not undertaken the necessary philosophical reflection to guarantee the truth of such a conclusion. Instead, if we ponder on monotheism in its fullest and most complete sense, we see that it means that true sovereignty and dominion belong only to God Almighty. There is no scope for any other being to act independently of God in any matter, such that they could claim it for themselves and rightfully feel love, hate, fear, grief, happiness, sorrow, or anything else. Therefore, when a person has delved deeply into monotheism and realized its meaning, they will only fear, grieve, love, and hate for the sake of God. This resolves the apparent contradiction between the two propositions: That they fear only God, and that they fear much that can do them harm or are cautious about affairs which they dislike should they befall them.

Nor have they delved deeply enough into the Qur'an, such that they would grasp the meaning of the verse, *Look! The allies of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve* (10:62). For this verse indicates a general absence of fear and grief, without placing any limitation or condition on this, except for what the verses explicitly state about the necessity of Godwariness. Therefore, these individuals do not fear anything in this world or the Hereafter except God, nor do they grieve.

As for the numerous verses that describe the believers without fear and grief at the time of death or on the Day of Resurrection, they only describe their conditions in a particular context and this does not necessitate negating or affirming anything about them in a different context, as should be obvious.

The verse, however, indicates that this description is for a particular group of believers who are distinguished from others by a special rank of faith that is unique to them, as explained by His saying: *those who have faith, and were Godwary*, with the implications we have previously explained.

In summary, the absence of fear and grief from other than God for the allies of God does not mean that good and evil, benefit and harm, salvation and destruction, ease and hardship, pleasure and pain, blessings

and afflictions are equal and indistinguishable in their perception, for the human mind and even the general animal sense cannot accept this. Rather, it means that they do not believe that anyone has any power besides God, and they restrict sovereignty and authority to Him alone. They fear only Him or what God wants them to be fearful of or to grieve over.

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٤﴾

(10:64) *For them is good news in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. There is no altering the words of Allah. That is the great success.*

In this verse, God gives them glad tidings in general to gladden their hearts and reassure them. If His saying, *for them is good news* ... is an announcement of glad tidings, it means that what they are promised will occur in both this world and the Hereafter. On the other hand, if it is informing them that God will give them glad tidings, then the glad tidings will be given to them in this world and the Hereafter, but, as for what is promised to them, will it be given to them in the Hereafter or in both this world and the Hereafter? The verse is silent on that matter.

God's words are replete with glad tidings for the believers that apply to His allies as well, such as His saying, ... *and it was a must for Us to help the faithful* (30:47), His saying, *Indeed We shall help Our messengers and those who have faith in the life of the world and on the day when the witnesses rise up* (40:51), and His saying: *There is good news for you today! Gardens with streams running in them* (57:12) and other verses.

When God says, *there is no altering the words of Allah*, this highlights that this is part of the foreordained decree that cannot be altered or revoked, and this should reassure the hearts of the faithful.

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ۚ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦٥﴾

(10:65) *Do not grieve at their remarks; indeed all might belongs to Allah; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.*

This verse admonishes the Prophet and consoles him in response to the idolaters' harassment of him by attacking his Lord, denigrating his

religion, and taking pride in their idols, as indicated by the following verse. It was as though he was saddened for the sake of God, so God consoled him and reassured him by reminding him that all honor belongs to God and that He is All-Hearing of their statements and All-Knowing of their conditions. After all, if all honor belongs to God, then there is no need to be concerned about their false claims of nobility, and if He is All-Hearing and All-Knowing, He could have punished them at any point if He wished. Therefore, if He does not punish them, it is because it is in the interest of the divine mission and in securing the best outcome for the faithful that He does not do so.

Based on this, it is evident that both His saying, *indeed all might belongs to Allah*, and His saying, *He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing*, provide the Prophet with two separate reasons why he should not let their remarks grieve him. This is why they are separated without conjunction (such as 'and').

أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ ۚ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(10:66) ***Look! To Allah indeed belongs whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth. And what do they pursue who invoke partners besides Allah? They merely follow conjectures and they just make surmises.***

This verse expounds His ownership of everything in the heavens and the earth, which establishes the concept of Lordship. The Lord is the owner and the one who manages the affairs of His property, and this ownership belongs to God alone, with no partners. The associates they ascribe to Him have no share in this ownership except in the imaginations of those who claim that they do and these delusions have no basis in reality.

The verse compares their associates to God and concludes that their association with Him is based on conjecture and delusion rather than truth and reality, and the remainder of the verse's meaning is clear.

Some scholars have argued that the verse says *whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth* instead of 'whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth' because the verse is concerned with God's Lordship over sentient and intelligent beings, which include angels and

both humankind and the jinn.

هُوَ الَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۚ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(10:67) *It is He who made the night for you, that you may rest in it, and the day to provide visibility. There are indeed signs in that for people who listen.*

This verse completes the evidence presented in the previous verse for proving His Lordship. Lordship, as you know, is ownership and management. His ownership has been mentioned in the previous verse, and by mentioning His management of the general affairs in this verse, which ensures the livelihood of people and the continuity of their existence, the concept of Lordship is completed.

The verse mentions the night and the rest it provides, as well as the day and the vision it offers, as a demonstration of God's management of the cosmos. The day prompts people to engage in various activities and movements to earn a living and improve their livelihoods. Human life is not complete with just activity or rest alone, so God has arranged matters with the darkness of the night, which invites people to rest and regain their energies after the exhaustion and fatigue of the day, and to find comfort and joy with their families, enjoying what they have gathered and earned during the day, and to devote themselves to worship. The light of the day, on the other hand, prompts them to see, long for, and seek things.

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ۗ سُبْحَانَهُ ۖ هُوَ الْغَنِىُّ ۖ لَهُ مَا فِى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ بِهَٰذَا ۚ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

(10:68) *They say, 'Allah has taken a son!' Immaculate is He! He is the All-sufficient. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?*

The concept of having a child, as commonly understood among people, involves a living being separating some of its physical components and

nurturing it either through pregnancy or by laying eggs, gradually rearing it until it becomes an individual like itself. In particular, humans may desire a child to help them deal with the vicissitudes of life and to serve as a support in times of need. This idea, from all angles, is impossible for God, as He is utterly exalted, transcendent above having parts or gradation in His actions, and free from any resemblance or similarity to created things, utterly self-sufficient and without need of others.

The Qur'an denies that God has a child, arguing against it from all the aforementioned perspectives, as shown in the verse, *And they say, 'Allah has taken a son.' Immaculate is He! Rather to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him, the Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decides on a matter, He just says to it, 'Be!' and it is* (2:116–117). We have discussed this at length in our commentary on the verses quoted here.

As for the verse presently under discussion, it presents an argument against the idea of God having a child from the last perspective only, which is the purpose of having a child to rely on in times of need. This can only be imagined for someone who is, by nature, in need and incomplete. God, however, is the Self-Sufficient, who has no need, as He owns everything that exists in the heavens and the earth.

When He says, *you have no authority for this*, it means that they have no evidence for their claim. They speak it out of ignorance without any proof, so the meaning here is that there is no basis for their belief. In fact, all the evidence stands to the contrary: God is rationally known to be absolutely Self-Sufficient, and children are only sought by those who are in need or deficient. This argument follows the conventions used in the art of debating and is a form of refutation supported by evidence.

The question, *Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?* is a reproach to them for speaking something about which they have no knowledge, which is something that human reason judges to be repugnant, especially when it concerns the Lord of the Worlds.

قُلْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(10:69) *Say, 'Indeed those who fabricate lies against Allah will not be felicitous.'*

This verse is a warning and a threat of the terrible consequences of fabricating lies against God. The two verses show a subtle shift in perspective that is quite apparent. God first relates their statement from a third person perspective, *They say, 'Allah has taken a son!'* Then, He addresses them directly as if He has been roused to anger and displeasure by what they have attributed to Him and fabricated against Him: *You have no authority for this. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?*

Finally, He addresses them disapprovingly without acknowledging them Himself, saying, *against Allah* instead of 'against Me' or 'against Us,' maintaining the dignity of His position by not associating with them directly. Then He turns away from them, distancing Himself from the expanse of their ignorance, and returns to addressing His Messenger instead, saying: *Say, 'Indeed those who fabricate lies against Allah will not be felicitous.'* as it is a warning and to warn is the Prophet's purpose.

مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُذِيقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

(10:70) *An enjoyment in this world; then to Us shall be their return, then We shall make them taste the severe punishment because of what they used to defy.*

This verse is also addressed to the Prophet, and it explains why they will not be felicitous, namely because their disbelief in God will only rant them a brief period of enjoyment in this world, after which they will return to God and face the severe punishment that He has in store for them.

Examining Narrations

(1) In the Amālī of Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, it is narrated: Abū ʿAmr reported that Aḥmad narrated from Yaʿqub b. Yūsuf b. Ziyād, who narrated from Naṣr b. Muzāhim, who narrated from Muḥammad b. Marwān, who narrated from al-Kalbī, who narrated from Abī Ṣāliḥ, who narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, who said: '*In Allah's grace and in His mercy* (10:58) refers to the grace that God bestowed upon the Prophet, and the mercy He bestowed upon ʿAlī.

Author's comment: This narration has also been reported by al-Ṭabrisī and Ibn al-Fārsi as a tradition with an incomplete chain (*mursal*) and in

al-Durr al-manthūr, by al-Khaṭīb and Ibn ʿAsākir.

(2) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates from Imām al-Bāqir: '*Allah's grace* refers to the Messenger of God, and *His mercy* refers to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib."

Author's comment: This is because the Prophet is a blessing bestowed by God upon all worlds, through the message and guidance he brought. Ali is the first to open the door of divine guardianship (*wilāya*) and actualize the blessing of guidance, so he is God's mercy. This narration is in accordance with what we have previously mentioned in the explanation of the verse.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Bayhaqī, who reported from Ibn ʿAbbās: '*Allah's grace* is the Qur'an and *His mercy* refers to making them the people of the Qur'an.

Author's comment: That is, God's grace is the knowledge and judgments that it contains, and His mercy is the actual realization of these contents by those who put them into practice. This goes back to what we have previously mentioned in the explanation of the verse. There is no contradiction between this narration and the previous one in terms of validity.

(4) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, about the verse *You do not engage in any work* (10:61), it is narrated that when the Messenger of God read this verse, he would weep profusely.

Author's comment: This narration has also been reported in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(5) In the *Amālī* of al-Mufīd, via his chain of narration from ʿAbāya al-Asadī from Ibn ʿAbbās, it is reported that the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was asked about the verse: *Look! The allies of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve* (10:62). He was asked, \Who are these allies (*awliyā'*)?" The Commander of the Faithful replied, 'They are those who are sincere devoted to God in their worship and perceive the inner reality of the world while others see only its outward appearances. They recognize its transitory nature when others are deluded by its fleeting pleasures. They abandon that which they know will abandon them, and they avoid that which they know will cause their ruin.'

Then, he (Commander of the Faithful) said, 'O you who cling

to this world, running after its fleeting pleasures, striving to build what will eventually be destroyed! Haven't you seen the places where your forefathers struggled in the lands, and where your children will struggle under the soil and dust? How often have you fallen sick and been wrapped in your shroud, seeking treatment from physicians and calling for help from your loved ones? Yet, your wealth did not save them, nor did your medicine avail them.'

(6) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Muathad al-ʿAjalī from Abī Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, that in the book of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, it is written regarding the verse *Look! The allies of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve*: 'When they perform God's obligatory acts, follow the examples of the Messenger of God, avoid what God has prohibited, renounce the fleeting pleasures of this world, desire what God has in store for them, earn a lawful living out of God's provision, and do not seek to boast or compete with others. They spend on what is obligatory and necessary. God blesses them in what they earn and rewards them for their deeds in the Hereafter.'

(7) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is reported from Aḥmad, al-Ḥakīm al-Nīshābūrī, and al-Tirmidhī, from ʿAmr b. al-Jamūḥ, that he heard the Prophet say: 'A servant does not truly attain faith until he loves for the sake of God and hates for the sake of God. When he loves for God's sake and hates for God's sake, he becomes deserving of God's patronage (*wilāya*).'

Author's comment: Regarding the above three narrations about the meaning of *wilāya* (guardianship, patronage, allyship), they are interconnected and consistent with the explanation we provided earlier for the verse.

(8) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is reported from Ibn al-Mubārak, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn Jarīr, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, from the Prophet regarding the verse, *Look! The allies of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve*: 'People remember God when they see them.'

Author's comment: This should be understood as one of the effects of their being allies of God, not that everyone who does so is considered a friend of God, unless it is meant that they are always like this in all their states and actions. On the meaning of this verse, it is reported from Abū

al-Duḥā and Saʿd from the Prophet: 'When they see them, people remember God.'

(9) A desert nomad came to the Messenger of God and asked: 'O Messenger of God, tell me about the verse, *Those who have faith, and were Godwary. For them is good news in the life of this world and in the Hereafter* (10:63–64).' The Messenger of God said: 'As for the phrase, *For them is good news in the life of this world*, it refers to the good dreams that are seen for the believer and through which he is given glad tidings of the Hereafter in his worldly life. As for *in the Hereafter*, it refers to the glad tidings given to the believer at the time of death, namely when the angels tell him: "God has forgiven you and those who carry you to your grave."' (ibid.)

Author's comment: There are many narrations in this vein from the Sunnī sources, and al-Ṣadūq has narrated it with an incomplete chain. In it, the phrase, 'seen for the believer' is in the passive voice, which means it includes both those dreams that the believer sees about himself and those dreams others see about him. In some narrations, the phrase, *at the time of death*, is supplemented with the glad tidings also given on the Day of Resurrection in Paradise.

(10) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, about the verse, *For them is good news in the life of this world and in the Hereafter*, it is narrated from Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir: 'The meaning of *good news in the life of this world* is the auspicious dream that the believer sees about himself, or that is seen about him by another. *In the Hereafter*, means in Paradise, which the angels give them glad tidings of when they come out of their graves, and on the Day of Resurrection until they enter Paradise—they give them glad tidings moment after moment.

Author's comment: A similar tradition is also narrated from the Prophet, and others are narrated similarly from al-Ṣādiq, and al-Qummī narrates it in his *Tafsīr*.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Shahrāshūb from Zurayq from al-Ṣādiq regarding the verse, *For them is good news in the life of this world*: It means that they are given the glad tidings of Paradise at the time of death by Muḥammad and ʿAlī.

(12) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via a chain of narrators, from Abān

b. ʿUthmān, from ʿUqba, that he heard Abā ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣādiq saying: 'Indeed, when a man's soul reaches his chest at the time of death, he has a vision.' I said: 'May I be your ransom, and what does he see?' He said: 'He sees the Messenger of God, and the Messenger of God says to him, "I am the Messenger of God, receive the good news." Then he said: Then he sees ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and he says: "I am ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the one you loved—I will certainly avail you today."'

The narrator said: 'I asked him: "Will anyone from the people see this and then return to the world?" He said: "If he sees this, he will die forever and that is a great thing indeed." He said: "And that is in the Qur'an, the saying of God Almighty: *Those who have faith, and were Godwary. For them is good news in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. There is no altering the words of Allah. That is the great success.*"'

Author's comment: This meaning is narrated from the Imāms of the Prophet's Household through many different chains, and his saying: "and that is a great thing indeed" (*wa aʿzama dhālik*) means the listener should consider it a great thing. And in the tradition, he took the verse, *Those who have faith, and were Godwary*, as an independent statement and interpreted it accordingly. A similar narration is found in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh from the Prophet. This is even though the apparent context of the verse explaining the verse before it, *Look! The allies of Allah* ... , which supports what we have suggested in some of our previous discussions that all possible analyses of His speech are evidence to be treated as valid evidence. For example, we can see this at work in the verse: ... *Say, 'Allah!' Then leave them to play around in their impious gossip* (6:91), which can be split as follows: *Say: 'Allah!', then leave them in their gossip* and *Say: 'Allah!', then leave them* and: *Say: 'Allah!'*

(13) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, who declared it authentic, and Ibn Mardawayh, all of whom narrated from Anas that the Messenger of God said: 'Indeed, messengership and prophethood have been severed, so there is no messenger after me nor any prophet, but there are the bearers of good news.' Those present said: 'O Messenger of God, and what are the good news bearers?' He said: 'The dream of the Muslim,

and it is one of the parts of prophethood.'

Author's comment: A similar saying has been narrated from Abū Qatādah and 'Ā'ishah from the Prophet. In this narration, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah report from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God said: 'As the time of death approaches, the dream of the believer will rarely be false, and the most truthful in dreams will be the most truthful in speech. The dream of the Muslim is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood, and dreams are of three types: the auspicious vision is a good news from God; the dream that causes sadness; and the dream in which a person speaks to himself. If any of you sees something he dislikes, let him stand up, spit, and not narrate the dream to people.'

(14) Ibn Abī Shaybah reported from 'Awf b. Mālik al-Ashja'ī that the Messenger of God said: 'Dreams are of three types: One is a threat from Satan to sadden the son of Adam; another is a matter that a person experiences while awake, which he then sees in a dream; and the last is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood.' (ibid.)

Author's comment: As for the division of visions into three categories, as reported in these two narrations and in similar narrations from the Sunnī and Shī'a Imāms, we will explain further in our commentary on Sūrah Yūsuf.

As for the auspicious dream being one of the forty-six parts of prophethood, many narrations have been reported from various Sunnī sources, narrated from the Prophet by a group of Companions that included Abū Hurayra, 'Ubadah b. al-Ṣāmit, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, and Abū Razīn. Anas, Abū Qatāda, and 'Ā'ishah that it is one of the parts of prophethood, as mentioned before.

Al-Ṣafadī has mentioned that the Prophet's divine mission lasted for twenty-three years, during which time he called to his Lord for thirteen years before the Emigration and ten years after it. It has been reported that revelation came to him for six months in the form of auspicious dreams before the Qur'an was revealed, and the ratio between the six months and the twenty-three years is one to forty-six.

It has also been narrated from Ibn 'Umar and Abū Hurayra from the Prophet that it is one of the seventy parts of prophethood. If this narration is authentic, the intention of 'seventy' is merely to emphasize the large

number without specifying the actual number seventy.

Know that the term *ru'ya* may be used in the language of the Qur'an and traditions for what the seer witnesses that others do not, even if he is not necessarily asleep. We have pointed this out in our earlier discussions on prophethood, and the best statement in its explanation is his saying: 'My eyes sleep, but my heart does not sleep.'

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Verses 71–74

The verses recount a synopsis of the story of Noah and the messengers who came after him until the time of Moses and Aaron. The verses describe how God Almighty dealt with the nations who denied their messengers, destroying them and saving the messengers and the believers who followed them, so that the deniers among the Prophet's nation could learn a lesson.

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي
وَتَذْكِيرِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ
لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنْظِرُونِ ﴿٧١﴾

(10:71) *Relate to them the account of Noah when he said to his people, 'O my people! If my stance* (maqāmī) *be hard on you and my reminding you of Allah's signs, I have put my trust in Allah. So conspire together* (ajmaʿū amrakum)*, along with your partners, leaving nothing vague in your plan* (la yakun amrukum ʿalaykum ghumma)*, then carry it out against* (wa aqḍū ʿalayya) *me without giving me any respite.*

Maqām ('stance') can be both an m-infinitive (*maṣdar mīmī*), a noun of time, or a noun of place, derived from the verb *qiyām* ('to stand' or 'to undertake'). And here it is used in either the first or third sense. In other words, it either refers to him undertaking the prophetic mission to call people to God's oneness, or to his rank as a prophet. *Ijmāʿ* ('to conspire together' from whence the verb *ajmaʿū* is derived) means 'to resolve' or 'to decide' and will sometimes take an object using the preposition *ʿalā*.

Al-Rāghib says: 'The verb *ajmaʿ* is usually used when there is a group of people who combine their thoughts together to achieve a goal.'

Ghumma means 'distress' or 'hardship' but also carries the meaning of 'covering', in the sense that grief covers the heart. It is related to the words *ghumām* ('clouds') and *ghaym* ('to become cloudy'), because of the way in which clouds cover the sky. To do *iqḍāʾ* (from whence *aqḍū* is derived) means to finish something off by killing it or destroying it utterly.

The meaning of the verse is: *Relate to them*, O Muḥammad, *the account of Noah*, and his great account, when he faced his people alone, speaking for himself. He was a messenger to the people of the world and challenged them to do whatever they could if they had the power. He completed his argument against those who denied him *when he said to his people, 'O my people! If my stance*— in calling for monotheism or the status of prophethood—*be hard on you and my reminding you of Allah's signs*—which doubtless makes you want to kill me and inflict harm upon me as much as you can to free yourselves from me—*I have put my trust in Allah*—to guard me against the hatred towards me that coils in your chests, by turning my affair over to Him and making Him my trustee who will look after me affairs without me needing to look after anything—*So conspire together, along with your partners*—who you claim come to your aid in times of hardships, and resolve to do whatever seems best to you (and this is a challenged that is intended to reveal their impotence)—*leaving nothing vague in your plan*—waste no effort in your attempts to defeat me—*then carry it out against me without giving me any respite...*—or any delay.'

In this verse, Noah challenges his people to do whatever they want to him, demonstrating that his Lord is capable of protecting him even if they all gather against him and seek help from their partners and idols.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

(10:72) ***If you turn your back, I do not ask any reward from you; my reward lies only with Allah, and I have been commanded to be of those who submit.'***

This continues from Noah's affirmation that he has placed his trust in his Lord in the previous verse, and it is like putting the effect in place of the cause. The meaning is: 'If you turn away and do not answer my call, there is no detriment in that for me, as I will not be harmed by your turning away from me. I would only be harmed by your turning away if I had asked you for a reward that would be lost due to your turning away, but I have not asked you for any reward, for my reward is only from God.'

... and I have been commanded to be of those who submit: Meaning, those who submit their affairs to Him to whatever He desires for them and

from them, and who do not arrogantly refuse His command to submit because of the worldly means that people submit themselves to because they anticipate some benefit from them or fear some harm.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ وَأَغْرَقْنَا
الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

(10:73) *But they impugned him. So We delivered him and those who were with him in the ark and We made them the successors* (khalā'if)*, and We drowned those who denied Our signs. So observe how was the fate of those who were warned!*

Khalā'if is the plural of *khalīfa* ('successor'). The verse means, 'We made those whom we saved successors on the earth and those who came after them succeeded them and took up their place.' The remainder of the verse's meaning is clear.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رُسُلًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا
لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

(10:74) *Then after him We sent messengers to their people. They brought them manifest proofs, but they would not believe something they had denied before. Thus do We seal the hearts of the transgressors.*

The messengers referred to in this verse are those who came after Noah until the time of Moses. It is evident from the context that the intended meaning of 'manifest proofs' (*bayyinat*) are the miraculous signs that the nations demanded from their prophets after they came, called their people to the truth, and were denied by them. The prophets brought these proofs, which included God's judging between them and their nations. This is supported by the subsequent phrase, *but they would not believe something they had denied before*, and so on. What comes to mind first is that the messengers came to them with clear signs, but God had sealed their hearts due to their transgressions, so they were unable to believe in what they had previously denied.

This implies that their denial must have occurred even before the

messengers came with these manifest proofs. The messengers had spread their call among the people and invited them to the Oneness of God, but they denied the message and the messengers. Then they demanded a miraculous sign from them, which the messengers brought, but they still did not believe.

We have previously discussed some aspects of this in our commentary on the verse: *but they were not the ones to believe in what they had denied earlier* (7:101). There, we argued that this verse refers to the events that transpired in the pre-existent world (*ʿālam al-dharr*)[1], but this does not contradict what we have just said about the meaning of this verse. The reader may refer back to that for further explanation.[2]

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn, from Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, from Ṣāliḥ b. ʿUqbah, from ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Juʿfī and ʿUqba, all from Abī Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, who said: 'Surely God created the creation, so He created those whom He loved from what He loved, and so He created what He loved from the clay of paradise. And He created those whom He hated from what He hated, and so He created what He hated from the clay of hell. Then He brought them forth in the realm of shadows.' I asked, 'What is the realm of shadows?' He replied, 'Have you not seen your shadow in the sun, at once something and not something?'

Then He brought forth prophets from amongst them so that they could call them to acknowledge God: *If you ask them, 'Who created them?' they will surely say, 'Allah'* (43:87). Then they called them to acknowledge the prophets, and some acknowledged, and some others denied. Then they called them to our allegiance, so those who acknowledged were loved by God, and those who denied were hated. This is His saying, *but they would not believe something they had denied before* (10:74). Then Abū Jaʿfar said:

1 We have translated *ʿālam al-dharr* as the world of pre-existence and not in the literal sense based on the exegesis of verse 7:172 in *al-Mīzān*, Eng. v. 16 (Trans.)

2 See *al-Mīzān*, Eng. v. 16 (Ed.)

'The denial was from before.'

Author's comment: This tradition has been narrated by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq in *'Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, via his chain of narrators to Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, from Ṣāliḥ, from 'Abd Allāh and 'Uqba, from the Imām. And it has also been narrated by al-'Ayyāshī from al-Ju'fī from the Imām.

(2) And in *Tafsīr of al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Zurāra and Ḥumrān, from Abī Ja'far al-Bāqir and Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣādiq: 'He created the creation, and they were as shadows, then He sent His Messenger Muḥammad to them. Some of them believed in him and others denied him, then He sent him amongst the other creation, and those who had believed in him in the shadows believed in him therein, and those who had denied him in the shadows denied him therein.' He explained: *they would not believe something they had denied before*.

Author's comment: We have elaborated on what is referred to as the world of pre-existence (*'ālam al-dharr*) in the commentary on the verse: *When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yes indeed! We bear witness.' Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Indeed we were unaware of this,'* (7:172).[1] There, we explained that the verses on the world of pre-existence establish the existence of another human world that is distinct from this material plane filled with pain, disasters, sins, and wrongdoings that we perceive through our senses.

This world of pre-existence is somewhat comparable to this perceptible world, but it is not governed by the same material laws, and its precedence over our world is not in terms of time but in another kind of precedence, similar to the precedence derived from His saying: *All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is* (36:82). For the divine command 'Be' and 'it is' bespeak a single reality, which is the existence of something externally. However, this existence itself, in its aspect that is turned towards God, takes precedence over it in its other aspect. In this divine aspect, it is neither gradual, nor temporal, nor hidden from its Lord, nor cut off from Him, unlike its aspect that faces towards creation, which

1 See *al-Mīzān* Eng. v. 16 (Ed.)

we have discussed in detail there.

What we have found in our discussion of the narrations shows that the world of pre-existence is like what has already been mentioned, but it is characterized by a subtle quality, which is what is expressed by referring to it as 'the realm of shadows.' Indeed, by carefully contemplating this expression, the intended meaning becomes clearer. For in the cosmic matters, there are things like shadows in that they are inseparable from them, reflecting the particularities of their existence and the effects of their existence, and yet, they are the same and, at the same time, they are not.

If we examine things and take an abstract view, reducing them to being nothing other than God's creation and pure acts of His that are neither detached from Him nor separate from Him—which is a true view of reality—nothing is realized in the core of their being except pure submission to God, subjugation to His will, humbleness before His majesty, attachment to His mercy, the command of His Lordship, and faith in His oneness and in what He sent His messengers with and revealed to them of His religion.

This is because these entities are shadows—both things and not things—when compared to the existences of material things—and the material world is taken as the basis for comparison, on which the verses are built from the perspective of their purpose being the clarification of the duty to assert God's oneness, an inescapable obligation that one is held accountable for on the Day of Resurrection.

And if we look from the perspective of God, and take this as our basis, and then this material world, with its material entities, is compared to it—which is also a true view of reality—then this world would be like a shadow, the divine would be the origin, and the caster of the shadow, as indicated by His saying, *Everything is to perish except His Face* (28:88), and His saying: *Everyone on it is ephemeral, yet lasting is the Face of your Lord* (55:26–27).

Now let us consider the tradition of al-ʿAyyāshī who narrates from Abū Baṣīr from Imām al-Ṣādiq, regarding the verse, *but they would not believe something they had denied before*, in which he said: 'God sent the messengers to humankind while they were in the loins of men and the wombs of women, so whoever believed at that time believed after that, and whoever denied at that time denied after that.'

The apparent meaning of this tradition is that the sending of prophets is related to the seeds contained in the loins and wombs. These are characterized living, rational, and morally responsible beings. However, this

is something that is necessarily known to be false, as we discussed in our treatment of the verse about the world of pre-existence. That it is unless, of course, the tradition is interpreted as referring to the world of pre-existence which surrounds this material, gradual, temporal world in the sense that the world of pre-existence exists outside of time. Hence, human existence in that realm is not associated with a specific point of time of human existence in this world (for example, when one is still a seed in the loins of one's forefathers). However, this is somewhat an unlikely reading of the tradition.

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Verses 75–93

Now God turns to relate the story of Moses and his brother and assistant Aaron with Pharaoh and his chiefs. The story is summarized, but He presents it in a manner that corresponds to the different stages of the mission of the Prophet of Islam and his calling his people and the tyrants among Quraysh and others towards God: The fact is that none of them believed except the weak amongst them, and the Quraysh persecuted them until they were forced to emigrate. So, the Prophet and a group of the believers emigrated to Medina. However, the Pharaohs of his people and their chiefs pursued them, so God destroyed them on account of their sins. God granted the believers the blessings of Islam and provided them with a good provision, but they differed after knowledge came to them and God will judge between them.

All of this confirms what God had confided to His Prophet in these verses concerning the future events that he and his people would face, and confirms what the Prophet himself had told his Companions and his nation: 'You will surely follow in the footsteps of the Children of Israel, such that if they entered a lizard hole, you would enter it also.'

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ بِآيَاتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

(10:75) *Then, after them, We sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his elite with Our signs, but they acted arrogantly and they were a guilty lot.*

Meaning: 'After Noah and the messengers who came after him, We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our signs to Pharaoh and the elite of his people, who were the Egyptians, but they arrogantly rejected Our signs and persisted in their crimes.'

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

(10:76) *When the truth from Us came to them, they said, 'This*

is indeed plain magic!'

Based on the apparent meaning of the verse, '*the truth*' in this verse refers to the true signs of God, like his staff turning into a serpent or his hand glowing white. God made these the sign of His message of truth, but when this truth came to them, they derided it and claimed, 'surely, this'—pointing to the signs of truth—'is plain magic!' Note that the verse only refers to God's signs as 'the truth' because they had derided it as magic.

قَالَ مُوسَىٰ أَتَقُولُونَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَكُمْ ۖ أَسِحْرٌ هَٰذَا وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

(10:77) *Moses said, 'Do you say of the truth when it comes to you? Is this magic? Magicians do not find salvation.'*

Meaning: 'When Moses heard what they said and their accusation that the truth was plain magic, he said to them, rebuking their statement in the form of a question: "*Do you say of the truth when it comes to you* that it is magic?" Then he repeats his rebuke in the form of a question, saying: "*Is this magic?*"' Their actual statement in the first question is omitted for the sake of brevity, since the second question implies it. When He says, *Magicians do not find salvation*, this could be an adverbial sentence explaining the rebuke indicated by his saying: *Is this magic?* It could also be an independent informative statement indicating the reality that Moses disassociates himself from the practice of magic because he sees himself as divinely saved and that magicians will not receive salvation.

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا وَتَكُونَ لَكُمَا الْكِبْرِيَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

(10:78) *They said, 'Have you come to us to turn us away* (li-talfitanā) *from what we found our fathers following, so that supremacy may be yours in the land? We will not believe in the two of you.'*

Laft ('to turn away', the root from whence the verb *talfitanā* is derived) means to divert someone from something.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse is: 'Pharaoh and his chiefs said to

Moses, reproaching him, "*Have you come to us to turn us away* and divert us *from what we found our fathers following* ..."—meaning the path of their forefathers and their ways—"*so that supremacy may be yours in the land?*"—meaning leadership, government, the exercise of power, and the influence of their will, implying that "you two are using religious preaching as a way to abolish our established way on earth and establish a new way that you two have innovated and wish to set-up in its place, through which you would gain authority and supremacy in the land by spreading it among the people and asking us to believe in you and obey you."'

In other words: 'You have come to replace the Pharaonic regime rooted in the Egyptians with an Israelite state led and directed by you two, and we will not believe in you so that you can achieve your goals and reach your desired ends with this fabricated call.'

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ائْتُونِي بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾

(10:79) *Pharaoh said, 'Bring me every expert magician.'*

Pharaoh ordered his elite to confront Moses' miracle with the magic of the magicians, as detailed in the rest of the verses that narrate the story and indicated by the following verses.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

(10:80) *So when the magicians came, Moses said to them, 'Throw down what you have to throw.'*

When they came and faced Moses and prepared to confront him, Moses said to them: 'Throw what you have prepared of ropes and staffs', as they had prepared them to cast them forth and make them appear as snakes and serpents with their magic.

فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا قَالَ مُوسَىٰ مَا جِئْتُمْ بِهِ السِّحْرُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيُبْطِلُهُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

(10:81) *So when they threw down, Moses said, 'What you have produced is magic. Indeed Allah will bring it to naught presently. Indeed Allah does not foster the efforts of those who cause*

corruption.

What Moses says here is an explanation of a reality that God would confirm when He made the truth manifest through him by transforming his staff into a serpent that swallowed the ropes and sticks thrown by the magicians, which they had made to appear in the forms of serpents through their practice of magic.

The truth he revealed to them was that what they had brought was magic, and the nature of magic is to make what is not real appear as though it actually is real to people's senses and their sight, even though it is false in itself. For surely, God will show it to be false because the divine order is based on affirming the truth, establishing it in the cosmos, defeating falsehood, and nullifying it. Thus, the sovereignty belongs to the truth, even if falsehood sometimes prevails.

That is why he explained his statement, *Indeed Allah will bring it to naught presently*, by saying, *Indeed Allah does not foster the efforts of those who cause corruption.* This is because righteousness and corruption are two opposing qualities, and it is part of the divine order to cause what is righteous to profit and cause what is corrupt to fail, that is, to bring about for each of them the consequence that is appropriate and specific to its nature. The consequence of righteous work is that it is suitable and harmonious with the realities of the cosmic order, and it blends with and mixes with them, so God will cause it to profit and maintain its nature. By contrast, the consequence of corrupt work is that it is not suitable or harmonious with these cosmic truths, so it is an exception to this cosmic order. If God were to cause this corruption to profit, it would corrupt the cosmic order in turn.

Therefore, all of the causes and effects within the cosmic order, with all of their power and influence, oppose corruption and attempt to restore it to the right path if possible; otherwise, they nullify it, destroy it, and erase it entirely from the record of existence.

This reality necessarily entails that the effects of magic and all other falsehoods shall not last in existence, and God has confirmed this in various places throughout the Qur'an. For example, He says, *And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot* (2:258), and His saying, *and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot* (5:108) and His saying, *Indeed Allah does not guide someone who is a profligate, a liar* (40:28). Another such example is

His saying in this verse, *Indeed Allah does not foster the efforts of those who cause corruption*.

And He further confirmed it by affirming the positive aspect in the following verse, *Allah will confirm the truth with His words, though the guilty should be averse* (10:82), as we will discuss presently.

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وَيُحِقُّ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

(10:82) ***Allah will confirm the truth with His words, though the guilty should be averse.'***

In the previous verse, God said, *Indeed Allah does not foster the efforts of those who cause corruption.* In doing so, He revealed the same truth contained in this verse from a negative aspect. The present verse expounds the positive aspect of this truth, *Allah will confirm the truth with His words*. Both aspects of this truth can be seen in the verse in Sūrah al-Anfāl, *so that He may confirm the truth and bring falsehood to naught, though the guilty should be averse* (8:8).

Based on this, it seems most likely that the term '*words*' in this verse refers to various kinds of divine decree that govern the affairs of the cosmos in accordance with truth. Surely, whatever God decrees comes to pass, and the divine order governs all aspects of the cosmos, including both truth and falsehood. Therefore, falsehood cannot endure long before vanishing, while the truth remains. This is the meaning of the verse, *He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to their capacity, and the flood carries along a swelling foam. And from what they smelt in the fire for the purpose of ornaments or wares, a similar scum. That is how Allah compares the truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it leaves as dross, and that which profits the people remains in the earth. That is how Allah draws comparisons.* (13:17). We shall discuss this meaning more fully in our commentary on the quoted verse.

In conclusion, Moses proclaimed this truth to make the magicians aware of the divine order of which they had previously remained heedless and to prepare their souls for what they were about to behold—the overwhelming triumph of miracle over magic and of truth over falsehood. That is why, when they beheld his miracles, they hastened to belief and threw themselves prostrating on the ground, as God has explained elsewhere.

Note that when God says, *though the guilty should be averse*, He singles out their guilt for mention. This is because the Arabic word *ijrām* suggests severing, as though they have severed themselves from the path of truth, and built their lives around this severance. Therefore, they detest the victory of the truth, because it implies the end of all they have built for themselves on this basis. That is why God attributes their aversion to the victory of the truth to their guilt, *though the guilty should be averse*. This evokes the meaning of the earlier verse, *but they acted arrogantly and they were a guilty lot* (10:75).

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَىٰ إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ عَلَىٰ خَوْفٍ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَإِيهِمْ أَنْ
يَفْتِنَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَقَالَ
مُوسَىٰ يَا قَوْمِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(10:83-84) *But none believed in Moses except some youths from among his people, for the fear of Pharaoh and their elite that he would persecute them. For Pharaoh was indeed a tyrant in the land, and indeed he was unrestrained. And Moses said, 'O my people! If you have faith in Allah, put your trust in Him, if you have submitted.'*

Some commentators on the Qur'an have suggested that the pronoun '*his*' in '*his people*' actually refers to Pharaoh rather than to Moses, and that the youths who believed in Moses from Pharaoh's people were those whose mothers were Israelites and whose fathers were Egyptians. Therefore, they followed their mothers in believing in Moses. Some said that these youths were Egyptians, while others have argued that it refers to Pharaoh's wife and the believer from Pharaoh's clan (referenced in verses 66:11) and 40:28), along with a servant girl and another of Pharaoh's wives who was called Mashāṭa.

Others have argued that the pronoun refers to Moses rather than Pharaoh and the youths mentioned here are a group of the Israelites who had learnt magic and were associates of Pharaoh. Others still have said that these were all Israelites, numbering 600,000 in total, and they are called 'youths' here because of their relative weakness. Yet others have argued that these are the offspring of the Israelites to whom Moses was sent, but

many of whom had perished over a long period of time. However, as will be evident to the reader, there is nothing in the wording of the verse to suggest any of these interpretations.

What the context of the verse suggests, and what is apparent from its wording, is that the pronoun refers to Moses, and the offspring from Moses' people are some of the weak members of the Children of Israel, not including their elite, powerful, and noble members. This would make sense, given that the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians and subjugated to their rule and their laws. In such situations, it is common for the noble and powerful to use any means to preserve their social status and national prestige, and to try to please the oppressor who controls them by offering wealth, showing loyalty, feigning advice, and avoiding things that he dislikes. Therefore, it was not possible for the elite of the Children of Israel to openly agree with Moses and display their faith in him.

However, the stories about the Children of Israel in the Qur'an serve as evidence that many of the arrogant and powerful among them did not believe in Moses right until the end of his mission, even if they outwardly submitted to him and obeyed his general orders that were aimed at saving the Israelites and benefitting their nation, securing their people's freedom, and in alignment with their own personal interests. Obedience in these matters was one thing for them, but having faith in God and following the teachings brought by Moses was another thing entirely.

Based on this, the pronoun '*their*' in the phrase, '*and their elite*' can be understood as referring to the youths of the Children of Israel, who, in their faith, were afraid of the elite and the nobles among their own people. Perhaps they prevented them from believing because of their own lack of faith, or because they feigned disbelief to keep Pharaoh and his people happy, so they would not be persecuted or oppressed by them.

As for the suggestion that the pronoun refers to Pharaoh and that it is plural because he had companions, or to the youths because they were Egyptians, these are claims without any basis in the text of the verse—especially the first one.

The verse says, *that he would persecute them*, meaning to torture them and force them to return to his faith. The verse also says, *for Pharaoh was indeed a tyrant in the land, and indeed he was unrestrained*, meaning that the reason for their fear was Pharaoh's uninhibited despotism in his rule.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'The result of Moses and Aaron being sent to Pharaoh and of the tyranny of Pharaoh and his elite, was that only the weakest members of the Israelites believed in him. However, they feared their own elites and they feared that Pharaoh would persecute them on account of their faith. Moreover, it was right that they should fear him, for surely Pharaoh was at that time a tyrant in the land with complete power over them. He was utterly unrestrained in his despotism. He did not treat his subjects justly, and he went to extremes in his oppression and persecution.'

Now, if it were possible to read the phrase '*his people*' as referring to all of those to whom Moses was sent and to all of those who heard his message from among both the Egyptians and the Israelites, the meaning of the verse would stand on its own without any need for the aforementioned explanations.

And Moses said, 'O my people! If you have faith in Allah, put your trust in Him, if you submit': Having faith in God engenders some knowledge in the believer, however general, about their relationship with God, namely that He is the ultimate cause of everything and that He is the director of all affairs. This knowledge calls on them to submit to God and to desist from relying on the apparent material causes of things, for that would be ignorant. Instead, they should turn all matters over to God and rely on Him. That is why the verse first conditions placing their trust in God and on their faith in Him, then adds to this the condition of their submission to Him.

The meaning of this verse can be understood as follows: 'If you have believed in God and have submitted to Him, then place your trust in Him.' However, the verse distinguishes between faith and submission, and does not say, 'If you have believed and submitted to God…', and this is because the two conditions differ in terms of their state. Faith, in the sense of belief, is already established for them. However, submission is part of the fulfilment and completion of faith. Not every believer has necessarily submitted, rather it befits the believer to complete their faith through submission.

Therefore, the distinction between these two conditions indicates that one of them is a necessary established condition, while the other condition is a goal that is to be achieved. This renders the meaning: 'O my people, if you have believed in God—and you have indeed believed—and

submitted to Him—and you should do so—then place your trust in God.' The subtlety and eloquence of the construction of the verse is plain to see.

فَقَالُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

(10:85-86) *Whereat they said, 'In Allah we have put our trust.' 'Our Lord! Do not make us a test for the wrongdoing lot, and deliver us by Your mercy from the faithless lot.'*

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They placed their trust in God to save them from Pharaoh and his elite. In their supplication, when they say, '*Our Lord! Do not make us a test for the wrongdoing lot*', this is a request that results from their trust in God, asking Him to remove the garments of weakness and humiliation from them and to save them from the disbelieving people.

As for the first point, they alluded to it by saying, '*Our Lord! Do not make us a test for the wrongdoing lot*.' This is because the thing that tempts the strong oppressors to oppress the weak is the weakness they perceive in the latter, which leads them to commit persecution and injustice. The weak person, due to their weakness, is a trial for the strong oppressor, just as wealth and children, with their allure and attractiveness, are a trial for humans. God says, *Rather your possessions and children are a trial, and Allah* (64:15). The world is a trial for those who pursue it. Their request to their Lord not to make them a trial for the wrongdoing people is a request to remove their weakness and humiliation by eliminating the source of the temptation for the wrongdoers to mistreat them, which means to remove the thing by removing its cause.

As for the second point, salvation is mentioned in the following verse: '*... and deliver us by Your mercy from the faithless lot.*'

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوَّآ لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوتًا وَاجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

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(10:87) *We revealed to Moses and his brother, 'Settle* (tabawwa'ā) *your people in the city* (miṣr)*, and let your houses face each other* (qibla)*, and maintain the prayer, and give good news to the faithful.'*

Tabwiya (from whence the verb *tabawwa'ā* is derived) means to take up somewhere as a residence or dwelling. *Miṣr* here refers to the land of Pharaoh. *Qibla* denotes the construction or arrangement of things so that they are facing one another. The meaning here is to make their houses face one another and be in the same direction. The purpose was for them to make it easy for them to convey the message to each other and to be able to establish the congregational prayer together, as indicated by the phrase, *and maintain the prayer*, that comes immediately after this instruction.

As for His saying, *and give good news to the faithful*, the context indicates that the '*good news*' is the fulfilment of what they asked in their supplication: *Our Lord! Do not make us a test for the wrongdoing lot...*

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'We revealed to Moses and his brother to take for your people dwellings in the houses of Egypt...'—as if they had not been living there until that time, except as a nomadic group living in tents or a similar lifestyle—'...and make you and your people's houses face one another and in one direction, so that you are connected with each other, and it becomes easy to convey the message, consult with one another, and gather for congregational prayers. And maintain the prayer, and give good tidings, O Moses, to the faithful, that God will save them from Pharaoh and his people.'

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَأَهُ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِكَ ۖ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَىٰ أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(10:88) *Moses said, 'Our Lord! You have given Pharaoh and his elite glamour* (zīna) *and wealth in the life of this world, our Lord, so that they lead astray from Your way! Our Lord! Blot out their wealth and harden their hearts so that they do not believe until they sight the painful punishment.'*

Adornment (*zīna*) refers to the outward appearance of a thing that attracts the soul to it. The relationship between adornment and wealth is general in nature; some adornment is not wealth for which a price is paid, such as a beautiful face or a well-proportioned stature. Some wealth is not adornment, like livestock and land, and some wealth is adornment, like

jewelry. The mutual relationship between adornment and wealth indicates that the intended meaning of 'adornment' is the aspect of adornment without considering monetary value, like jewelry, attire, furniture, luxurious buildings, and other such things.

Moses said, '*our Lord, so that they lead astray* (li-yuḍillū) *from Your way*.' Some have argued that the *lām* in *li-yuḍillū* signifies consequence (*'āqiba*), meaning that the outcome of the affair is that they lead people astray from God's path. It is not possible to read this *lām* as purposive, as we already know on the basis of clear evidences, that God does not send His messengers to bid people to error, nor does He want people to go astray. Therefore, He cannot have given them wealth 'in order that' they lead others astray.

What they have said is true, but only in the case of primary misguidance, which something that God Almighty would never do. However, as for misguidance in the sense of being punished through misguidance or repaying evil with evil, there is no evidence to suggest that this is something God would not do. On the contrary, there are many instances in the Qur'an that confirm that this is something He does. Pharaoh and his elite were arrogant and corrupt, and they persisted obstinately in their wrongdoing, so there is no reason why God should not give them adornment and wealth to lead them astray from His path as a recompense for what they earned through their misdeeds.

Others have said that the *lām* in *so that they lead astray* (li-yuḍillū) signifies a supplication. Still others have suggested that it should actually be understood as having an implicit negation, meaning: *so that they do not lead astray from Your path*. However, the context of the verse does not support either of these explanations.

It is said that '*blot out*' means to cause to decline or deteriorate. So, when Moses asks God to *blot out their wealth*, this means to make it evanescent and fleeting. As for the phrase, 'harden their hearts' (*washud 'alā qulūbihim*): The imperative *ushdud* is derived from *shadd* (to tighten), which is the opposite of *ḥall* (to loosen). Therefore Moses is asking God to bind their hearts and seal them so that they will never be open to the truth and they will never believe until they see the painful punishment that is in store for them. Some commentators have said that the meaning of *ushdud* is to keep them steadfast in their position in Egypt after the obliteration

of their wealth, so that it would be more severe and painful for them. Similarly, others say that it is an allusion to their death and destruction. However, these are rather far-fetched explanations of the passage.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'After Moses despaired of Pharaoh and his elite ever believing and was certain that they would persist in misguidance and leading others astray, as indicated by the context of his speech, he said: "Our Lord! Indeed You have given Pharaoh and his elite, as a recompense for their disbelief and arrogance, adornment and wealth in this worldly life. Our Lord! It is Your will for them to lead those who follow them astray from Your path, and Your will is not to be thwarted, and Your purpose is not to be foiled. Our Lord! So extend Your wrath over them, obliterate their wealth and change it from a source of blessing to a source of punishment, and make their hearts tight and sealed so that they will not believe until they experience a situation in which faith will not benefit them, which is the time when they will sight the divine punishment."'

This supplication by Moses, peace be upon him, against Pharaoh and his elite was only after he completely despaired of their faith and knew that in their life they would only mislead and misguide others, just like Noah's supplication against his people, as God relates elsewhere: *And Noah said, 'My Lord! 'Do not leave on the earth any inhabitant from among the faithless. If You leave them, they will lead astray Your servants and will not beget except vicious ingrates* (71:26–27). It would not befit the prophets to speak out of conjecture or speculation when they are in the presence of the Lord of the Worlds, whose majesty is exalted and whose rank is honored. Therefore, it is clear that they had complete certainty that their peoples would not be guided.

قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَتْ دَعْوَتُكُمَا فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَانِّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(10:89) *Said He, 'Your supplication has already been granted. So be steadfast, and do not follow the way of those who do not know.*

As the context indicates, this verse is addressed to Moses and Aaron, even though the supplication in the previous verse was only from Moses. This supports what some commentators have mentioned, namely that Moses used to supplicate, and Aaron would to affirm his supplication and

say 'Amen.' This means that they would supplicate together, even though the words of the supplication themselves were only uttered by Moses alone.

Steadfastness (*istiqāma*) means to be firm in a matter. In this context, it means that Moses and Aaron should remain steadfast in calling others to God and reviving the word of truth. What is meant by the phrase, *those who do not know*, is the ignorant amongst the Children of Israel. Moses has previously described them in such terms, saying: *You are indeed an ignorant lot* (7:138).

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is, *Said He*—God, speaking to Moses and Aaron—'*Your supplication has already been granted*—calling down a painful punishment on Pharaoh and his elite, the obliteration of their wealth, and the hardening of their hearts—*so be steadfast*—and do not waver in what you have been commanded to do, which is to call to God and revive the word of truth—*and do not follow*—ever—*the way of those who do not know*'—by responding to what they demand of you out of their own desires and the calls of their lusts. This implies that they will ask for things that involve reviving their tribal traditions and their pre-Islamic way of life.

Overall, the verse mentions the answer to their supplication, which includes the punishment of Pharaoh and his elite and their being denied the success of faith, and promises them both this, which is why, in the following verse, His fulfilment of this promise is described in more specific terms.

There was nothing in their supplication that indicated a request either for immediate action or delay in their punishment. This is also true of the verse indicating that God accepted their supplication and delivered what they asked for and of the verse informing them how the promise was fulfilled. It is reported in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, from Ibn Jurayj, that Pharaoh lived another forty years after this supplication.[1]

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدْوًا ۖ
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنَتْ بِهِ بَنُو

1 As narrated from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (al-Ṣādiq) and it was reported from him in *al-Iḥtijāj*, and similarly in *al-Kāfī* and *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, from Hishām b. Sālim from the Imām and in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, from his father from al-Nawfalī from al-Sakūnī from him. (Auth.)

إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

(10:90) *We carried the Children of Israel across the sea, whereat Pharaoh and his troops pursued them* (atbaʿa-hum) *out of defiance and aggression* (baghyan wa ʿaduwwan). *When overtaken* (adraka-hu) *by drowning, he called out, 'I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of those who submit.'*

Baghyan wa ʿaduwwan ('out of defiance and aggression') means wrongly and tyrannically.

Idrāk ('to overtake', from whence the verb *adraka* is derived), means to catch something and gain power over it. Likewise, *itbāʿ* ('to pursue', from whence *atbaʿa* is derived) means to try and catch it.

I believe that there is no god except Him in whom the Children of Israel believe: Meaning, 'I believe that He is One.'

Pharaoh describes God '*Him in whom the Children of Israel*' so that he could achieve what they had achieved through their faith, namely crossing the Red Sea and being kept safe from drowning. That is why he mentions both faith and submission to remove the consequences of his persistent disobedience, which was associating partners with God and showing arrogance towards Him. The rest of the verse's meaning is obvious.

آلْآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

(10:91) *'What! Now?* (Āl-ān) *When you have been disobedient heretofore and were among the agents of corruption?!*

Note that the verse begins with *āl-ān*, with a long vowel at the beginning. This is because it is a contraction of *a al-ān* (where *a* is an interrogative particle, signifying a question). In other words, 'What? Do you believe in God now, at a time when the punishment has already overtaken you, and faith and repentance are of no avail when you are shrouded by punishment and death comes from every direction. You have been disobedient before this and were one of those who spread corruption in the earth. You squandered your days in disobedience to God and did not repent in time. So, what benefit does faith bring you now that it is too late?' This is what Moses and Aaron had asked their Lord for, to take him with a painful

punishment and to block his path to faith until the punishment overtakes him, so faith will not benefit him, nor will repentance avail him anything.

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ آيَةً ۚ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا لَغَافِلُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

(10:92) ***So today We shall deliver*** **(nunajjī-ka)** ***your body so that you may be a sign for those who come after you.' Indeed many of the people are oblivious to Our signs.***

Tanjiya and *injā'* (deliverance) are derived from the word *najāt* (salvation), just like *talkhīṣ* (refinement) and *ikhlāṣ* (devotion) are derived from *khalāṣ* (rescue).

When God tells Pharaoh that He will deliver his body, this implies that there is something that exists beyond the body which Pharaoh lost when his body was overtaken by God's punishment, meaning the soul (*nafs*), which is also called the spirit (*rūḥ*). It is this soul that is taken away and received by God at the time of a person's death, as we read in the verses: *Allah takes the souls at the time of their death* (39:42); *You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with your souls* (32:11). The soul is what a person refers to when they say 'I.' It is the part that makes a human being a human being. It is what allows us to perceive, to intend, and to act through the body and its physical abilities and limbs. Therefore, the body is an instrument through which the soul interacts with the physical world.

The unity that exists between the soul and the body is why the body is referred to by the same name as the soul. Otherwise, the names of individual persons actually belong to their souls, not their bodies. As it is the soul, not the body, that is the core of the person's being. This is in addition to the continuous change that the body undergoes throughout life, and the natural replacement of cells that occurs from time to time until perhaps the body, with all its parts, is replaced by other parts forming a different body. If the identity of Zayd was bound up with the body that his mother delivered the day she gave birth to him, and the name 'Zayd' was assigned to this body, he would be a different person when he is seventy or eighty, and the name Zayd would belong to somebody else. Equally, a man could not be rewarded or punished for what he did when he was a youth because the acts obedience and disobedience he performed at that

time belonged to somebody else.

These and similar examples are clear evidence that the humanity of a person resides in the soul and not the body, and that peoples' names really belong to their souls rather than their bodies. A person can perceive and understand this in general, even though they might deny it when it comes to detail.

In summary, the verse, *so today We shall deliver you through your body* ... is explicit or close to explicit in indicating that souls exist beyond physical bodies, and that people's names are really for their souls and not their bodies, except for what is attributed to bodies due to the unity between them.

Therefore, *so today We shall deliver you through your body* means: 'We will remove your body from suffering and save it. This is a kind of deliverance for you...'—given the unity between the soul and the body, which results in any action that affects one of them similarly affecting the other—'...so that it may be a sign for those who come after you.' This is akin to His saying, *From it did We create you, into it shall We return you* (20:55). The thing that returns to the earth is a person's body, not the complete person, so the attribute of returning is related to the person only due to the unity between their soul and body.

Some commentators have mentioned that understanding the word *deliver* as being derived from *tanjiya* or *injā'*, which signify the safety and salvation of the one being rescued, would mean that Pharaoh emerged from suffering alive, whereas we already know that God brought him out of it dead. Hence, it is necessary to take His saying, *deliver* in this verse as being derived from the alternate root *najwa*, meaning 'high land.' Therefore, the meaning is: 'today we will bring your body out of the punishment to a high piece of land.'

Some might argue that the word *badan* here actually refers to Pharaoh's armor rather than his body. This is because Pharaoh wore a suit of golden armor, so God brought this armor out of the water to be a sign and a lesson for those who came after him. Others have suggested that the use of the word *deliver* is actually being used in a form of derision. However, the truth is that all of these explanations are unnecessary. God does not say, 'We shall deliver you', rather He says, 'We shall deliver you through your body' (*nunajjī-ka bi-badanik*), meaning save your body. The Arabic preposition *bi* in this phrase denotes the body as either a cause or an instrument, which

points to the union that exists between the soul and the body.

Moreover, interpreting the phrase, *We shall deliver you through your body*, to mean that Pharaoh will be placed on an elevated piece of ground does not resolve the issue at the core of this passage. The body that was placed on this piece of high ground, according to this reading, was the body of Pharaoh, which is not identical with Pharaoh himself, otherwise he would have survived. Therefore, the best way to explain this phrase is through the apparent union between a person and their body. If this apparent unity makes it valid to apply a person's name to the body without the soul, then it could also validate saying that a person was delivered from danger because his body was delivered, especially with the presence of an indication that this deliverance applies specifically to the body and not the person as a whole, in other words not aiming to preserve his life and health in both body and soul. This is what is indicated by His saying, *through your body*.

وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مُبَوَّأَ صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

(10:93) *Certainly We settled the Children of Israel in a true settlement* (mubawwaʾ sidqin) *and We provided them with all the good things, and they did not differ until the knowledge had come to them. Your Lord will indeed judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that about which they used to differ.*

In other words, we made them inhabit a true abode. When a thing is attributed to the truth, such as a true promise, a true speech, a true entrance, or a true exit, this is to show that its full meaning and all of its implications are genuinely found in it, without any falsehood in the outcomes that its meaning promises to the one seeking it. Therefore, 'a true promise', for instance, means that the one giving this promise will fulfil it in full and is pleased to do so. Therefore, the one being given this promise is his right to hope for it. If this is not the case, it is not a true promise (*waʿd ṣidq*) but a false one (*waʿd kadhb*), as if its meaning and all that it implies are false.

Therefore, when God says '*a true settlement*', this means that God settled them in a dwelling place in which are found all the things a human seeks from a residence, like good water and air, the blessings of the earth, abundance of its bounties, stability in it, and so on. This 'true settlement' is, of course, the land of Jerusalem and the Levant, where God settled the Children of Israel and called it the Holy Land, and the Qur'an has recounted the story of how they came to enter it.

Some scholars have argued that this dwelling place refers to Egypt, which the Children of Israel entered and in which they made homes. However, this is not something mentioned in the Qur'an. Even if we grant that they entered it a second time, they did not settle in it permanently. Therefore, naming this situation a '*a true settlement*' is not supported by the meaning of this phrase.

The passage, that is, *Certainly We settled the Children of Israel... with all the good things* has the tone of a complaint and a reproach. This is illustrated by the fact it concludes with the phrase, *and they did not differ until the knowledge had come to them* and the following phrase, *Your Lord will indeed judge between them on the Day of Resurrection*. This clarifies the consequence of their disagreement after knowledge came to them and serves as the conclusion to the story.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'We completed our blessings upon the Children of Israel, settled them in a true abode, and provided them with good things after a long period of deprivation in which they suffered under the yoke of Egyptian oppression. We unified their nation and gathered them together, but they were ungrateful for Our blessings, divided their unity, and disagreed on the truth. Their disagreement was not due to their ignorance but actually following their knowledge, and indeed, your Lord will judge among them in what they used to differ.'

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Verses 94–103

These verses present an argument for the truth of what God has revealed in this chapter of the Qur'an regarding the creation and the Resurrection and the stories of the prophets and their nations—including Noah, Moses, and other messengers and nations—summarizing what the people of other scriptures read in these before the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet.

Next, the verses present something akin to a distillation of the meaning of the previous sections, which is, that no one will be able to believe in God and His signs except by God's leave. And that God only permits belief in those whose hearts have not been sealed and who have not been contaminated by impurities. Otherwise, if God's verdict becomes due against him, he will not believe in God and His signs until he sees the punishment.

So, the divine order that has governed the cosmos since people were created is that they differed between those who denied God's signs and those who affirmed them, and God's custom (*sunna*) has been to judge between them by truth after the arrival of their messengers, saving the messengers and those who believed in them, and overtaking others with destruction.

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَاسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَءُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

(10:94) *So if you are in doubt* (shakk) *about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord; so do not be among the sceptics.*

Shakk means suspicion, and the phrase *about what We have sent down to you* refers to the teachings related to the creation and the Resurrection and God's custom of judging the nations that has already been discussed in this chapter. When God says, 'ask those who read the Book before you' (*yaqra'ūn al-kitāb min qablik*), the verb *yaqra'ūn* is a present tense verb, signifying continuity, while the prepositional phrase *before you* qualifies the meaning of *the Book*, meaning '*the Book* that was sent down *before you*.'

This is what the context indicates.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: *So if you*—O Prophet!—*are in doubt*—and have misgivings—*about what We have sent down to you*—about the teachings relating to the creation and the Resurrection and the summarized accounts of previous prophets that reflect the divine order that governs God's creation, namely to invite people to the truth first and then to judge between them—*ask those*—of the People of the Book—*who*—continue to—*read the Book*—that was sent down—*before you.* I swear—*The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord; so do not be among the sceptics*—who are hesitant.

Now, this does not imply the existence of any doubt in the heart of the Prophet, nor does it confirm any hesitation from him. This form of address is valid for addressing those who may harbor doubts or misgivings, and it is also valid for addressing those who are certain of the matter and are well-versed that the meaning being conveyed is of something that is affirmed by multiple evidences and supported by numerous verses. If the addressee or listener doubts any of these, they could rely on another one of them.

This is a common method in the norms of communication and understanding that is used by rational people in their interactions. It is in accordance with what their faculties direct them towards. For instance, one might present an argument for a matter, then say: 'If you have doubts about that, or we agree that it does not necessarily produce the desired conclusion, there is another argument for it, which is such and such...' This hints that there are available and supporting arguments like pillars raised for something that does not need more than one of them, but the aim of having many of them is for the pavilion to have multiple sources of support and, thereby, be as stable as possible.

The focus of the discourse, then, is that these are teachings that God has made clear to you with arguments that human minds cannot deny, and stories illustrating God's custom in dealing with His creation, and the evidence supporting this. He explained these to you in a Book in which there is no doubt. For each explanation, there is an argument, and there is another argument that the people of the previous scriptures—who continue to read these scriptures faithfully—find therein. There is the creation and the Resurrection, and there is the divine religion that God's messengers were sent with, calling people to it, and no nation was called to it except that

they were divided into believers and deniers. Then God revealed a decisive sign to separate between truth and falsehood and judged between them.

This is something that the People of the Book cannot deny. They only used to deny the glad tidings brought by the Prophet some of the teachings that were exclusive to Islam, and the particular details they had altered in their scriptures. This verse subtly indicates that God did not mention the accounts of the prophets Hūd and Ṣāliḥ in the verses of this chapter, because the Torah available to them did not contain their stories. The same is true of the story of Jethro and the story of Christ, due to the disagreement of the People of the Book about these figures. Only what they cannot deny was used as evidence in these verses.

Therefore, this verse, in instructing the Prophet to present this argument, is of a similar form to the argument found in the verse: *Is it not a sign for them that the learned of the Children of Israel recognize it?* (42:197).

This chapter of the Qur'an is one of the earliest to be revealed in Mecca, when the dispute between the Muslims and the People of the Book, especially the Jews, was not as intense as it became in Medina. They had not yet shown the level of obstinacy and defiance that they exhibited after the Prophet's emigration to Medina, nor had fighting yet broken out between them and the Muslims, reaching a point where they declared, *Allah has not sent down anything to any human* (6:91).

This is the meaning given by the context of the verse. I believe that if you ponder deeply over this verse and other related verses that address the Prophet, affirming the truth of what has been revealed to him by his Lord, challenging humans with their inability to produce anything like it, and describing the Prophet as having clear insight into his mission and being guided by his Lord, you will find this explanation satisfying. It should relieve you from reading the unnecessary explanations some scholars have offered in order to explain the verse, which are not worth mentioning or investigating here.

وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

(10:95) *And do not be of those who deny the signs of Allah, then you shall be among the losers.*

This verse first prohibits doubt and hesitation, then it escalates to

prohibit the denial of God's signs, which is tantamount to obstinate defiance in the face of the truth and arrogance towards God. For a sign of God, by definition, cannot be a sign (*āya*) unless its implications are clear and its message apparent. Denying such a sign can only result from obstinacy and stubbornness.

The phrase, '*then you shall be among the losers*' is a consequence of denying God's signs. It is both the result and the inevitable outcome, and thus the real thing being warned against by the verse. The meaning is really: 'do not be among the losers.' Loss (*khasr*) literally means the decrease or total loss of investment capital. Here, it refers to faith in God and His signs, which is the ultimate capital for human happiness in this life and the next, as can be inferred from the following verse which attributes their loss to their disbelief.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَوْ جَاءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ آيَةٍ
حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٩٧﴾

(10:96-97) ***Indeed those against whom your Lord's judgment has become due will not have faith, even though every sign were to come to them, until they sight the painful punishment.***

This verse explains the prohibition on denying God's signs in the previous verse by highlighting the situation of those who are warned against. The original structure of the verse, based on the meaning derived from the context, should be: 'Do not be among the deniers, because the deniers do not believe and thus they become losers, as faith is the key to happiness.' God's phrase, *those against whom your Lord's judgment has become due* is placed where 'the deniers' would be, to illustrate the basis of the ruling. The deniers are losers because God's judgment has become due against them. In any case, all matters ultimately belong to God.

The divine judgment that has become due against those who deny the signs of God is His saying on the day of the promulgation of the general law for Adam and his wife and their progeny after them: *We said, 'Get down from it, all together! Yet, should any guidance come to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who are faithless and deny Our signs, they shall be the inmates of the Fire and they shall remain therein forever* (2:39).

This is what He means by saying (in the context of explaining the reason for the loss of the deniers): *Indeed those against whom your Lord's judgment has become due*—they are the deniers upon whom the word of punishment has become due, hence they *will not have faith*. Therefore, they are the losers because they have wasted the capital of their happiness, which is faith, so they have been deprived of it and its blessings in this world and the Hereafter. Since the decree has become due against them that they will not believe, there is no way for them to believe, even if every sign comes to them, *even though every sign were to come to them, until they sight the painful punishment.* And there is no benefit in forced belief.

God has repeated this phrase on numerous occasions in the Qur'an and highlighted the loss and belief that results from it. For example, see the verses: *The word has certainly become due against most of them, so they will not have faith* (36:7); *... so that anyone who is alive may be warned, and that the word may come due against the faithless* (36:70);

This is because they deny God's signs as a result of their disbelief, hence they suffer loss. See also, the verse: *... and the word became due against them, as it did against the nations that passed away before them of jinn and humans. They were indeed losers* (41:25).

And there are other verses besides these with the same meaning.

From the above verses, it is clear that:

1) Obstinacy towards the truth and the denial of God's signs makes the divine verdict of eternal punishment become due against a person.

2) The capital of life's happiness for a person is faith.

3) Every person is ultimately a believer, whether by accepted, voluntary belief, which leads him to the happiness of this life and the Hereafter, or by unacceptable, forced belief, when he sights the painful punishment.

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا آمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٩٨﴾

(10:98) ***Why has there not been any town that might believe, so that its belief might benefit it, except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in the life of this world, and We provided for them for a while.***

The apparent context suggests that the phrase '*why has there not...*'

is meant as encouragement, and that what is meant by belief here is the correct, voluntary faith, as suggested by His saying after it, *so that its belief might benefit it*. Because the encouragement relates to a past matter that did not occur, the sentence conveys a sense of despair about people believing, which is equivalent to a negation (that is, 'No, only the people of Jonah believed'). Therefore, the exception in His saying, *except the people of Jonah* makes sense.

Therefore, the meaning is: Of all the towns to which our messengers came and they denied them, why was there not a town that believed voluntarily before the punishment descended on them, so that their belief might have benefitted them. No, only the people of Jonah believed, and when they believed, we relieved them of the punishment of humiliation in this world and granted them the enjoyments of this world until they reached the end of their natural, usual lifespans. From this, it is evident that the exception, *except the people of Jonah*, is a continuous exception (meaning that the people of Jonah are part of the category from which they are being exempted).

Some scholars have read this verse as meaning: 'There was not a situation where the inhabitants of a town believed in their entirety, not one of them deviating from the truth, except the people of Jonah. So, why were not all towns were like them?'

However, while the meaning is not itself problematic, the wording of the verse does not corroborate its particular meanings.

Other commentators have said that the verse means it was not usual for a town to disbelieve and then believe and actually benefit from this belief, except for the people of Jonah; when they believed, We removed the punishment from them and let them enjoy life. However, the problem with this reading is similar to the previous one.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَآمَنَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۚ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾

(10:99) *And had your Lord wished, all those who are on earth would have believed. Would you then force people until they become faithful?*

In other words, 'but He did not want that, so they did not all believe,

and they do not believe.' Therefore, this was up to God's will, but He did not will it, so you should not hope for it or strive for it, because you cannot compel them to believe by force. After all, the faith that God wants is the kind of faith that people acquire through exercising their own free will and choosing what is good, not due to compulsion and coercion.

That is why God follows this with a rhetorical question with the force of a denial, *Would you then force people until they become faithful?* In other words: 'After we have made clear that the matter is dependent upon God's will and He did not will it that all people should believe regardless of their own free will. Therefore, you have no say in the matter save to coerce people and force them to believe, but I forbid you to do this, so you cannot do that, and I do not accept the faith of anyone who believes in this matter.'

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(10:100) *No soul may have faith except by Allah's leave, and He lays defilement on those who do not apply reason*

When the previous verse made clear that the matter is up to God Almighty and that, if He had willed that all the people of the earth should believe, they would have certainly believed, but He did not will it, so there is no hope of every single person believing. In this verse, He further clarifies this, saying that dominion belongs exclusively to God, so He fundamentally controls every matter and no partner shares this power with Him except for some of the things He permits His creation to do.

Having faith in God, out of free will and being guided to Him, is a matter that requires a specific cause to occur. This cause does not exert influence or operate in the universe by creating its effect except that God grants it leave to do so. However, by imposing spiritual impurity and misguidance upon the obstinate and faithless, God refuses them permission to believe, and leaves no hope for their happiness.

If God had granted this permission to anyone, He would have granted faith to others besides these deniers. When God says, *No soul may have faith except by Allah's leave*, this is a universal and essential rule that assigns the capacity of souls to believe to God granting them permission to do so. And His saying, *and He lays defilement on those who do not apply reason*,

deprives those who lack understanding of the capacity to receive this permission, while leaving it in place for others.

In the verse, 'defilement' (*rajs*) denotes the opposite of faith (*īmān*) in terms of doubt (*shakk*) and suspicion (*rayb*). In other words, it is to these concepts that *defilement* refers to in this context because it is juxtaposed with faith. This is understood from His saying, *Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam, and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height. Thus does Allah lay defilement on those who do not have faith* (6:125).

The phrase, ... *those who do not apply reason*, refers to those people who deny the signs of God, as they are the ones upon whom the sentence of punishment has become due, for God has set a seal upon their hearts, so they do not understand. As He said, "*Allah has set a seal on their hearts, so they do not know* (9:93).

قُلِ انْظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

(10:101) *Say, 'Observe what is in the heavens and the earth.' But what signs or warnings will avail a people who have no faith?*

This means: 'Look at the diverse and scattered creations, each one of which is a sign among the signs of God the Exalted, which invites you to believe.' And as His saying, *But what signs or warnings will avail a people who have no faith?*, the Arabic of this sentence reads *mā tughnī al-āyāt wa al-nudhur 'an qawmin la yu'minūn*. It appears that the particle *mā* is interrogative and the sentence is a rhetorical question conveying the meaning of denial and despair, akin to a physician saying, 'what medicine can cure the affliction of death?' In other words, God says to the Prophet: 'We have commanded you to warn them, by telling them to *'observe what is in the heavens and the earth.'* However, what effect will these warnings or signs have on them when they have no faith?' In other words, when they are determined and resolved not to believe, because their hearts have been sealed. However, one could also read this *mā* as a negation (that is, 'But neither signs nor warnings avail a people who have no faith.').

فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي

مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

(10:102) *Do they await anything except the like of the days of those who passed away before them? Say, 'Then wait! I too am waiting along with you.'*

This follows on from what God said in the previous verse, *But what signs or warnings will avail a people who have no faith?* That is to say, if the signs and warnings do not benefit them at all, as they completely disbelieve, they are merely awaiting the likes of the days of those who passed before them. They are holding themselves back for divine punishment, which is the sign that will distinguish between you and them and destroy them, for the sentence of punishment has indeed become due against them.

Hence, the Prophet was commanded to relay this to them, by saying, *'Then wait! I too am waiting along with you.'* This refers to '*the days of those who passed away before them*', meaning 'Wait for the Day of Punishment that will separate between me and you, making you believe. Yet your belief will not benefit you then, and *I too am waiting along with you.*'

As we have already explained, the question posed in this verse is rhetorical with the force of a denial.

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنْجِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(10:103) *Then We shall deliver Our messengers and those who have faith. Thus it is a must for Us to deliver the faithful.*

This verse completes the beginning of the previous verse (*Do they await anything except the like of the days ...*) and His statement, *Say, 'Then wait! I too am waiting along with you'*, is an intervening clause. Therefore, the original arrangement according to the meaning of the verses is: *Do they*—your people—*await anything except the like of the days of those*—nations—*who passed away before them*—against whom the verdict of punishment became due and upon whom we sent the sign of divine punishment—*Then We shall deliver Our messengers and those who have faith*.

The intervening clause, *Say, 'Then wait! I too am waiting along with you'*, is inserted here because it relates to the question that precedes it in the discourse, which also spoke of awaiting (*Do they await...?*). It was appropriate for this statement to be placed alongside it as a response, to clarify

that the Messenger of God is also waiting like you disbelievers, and then mention the issue of salvation, which is not exclusive to the Messenger of God but includes the believers as well. Put simply: the expectation of judgment was specific to the Messenger of God between himself and them. But the expectation that God will save the Messenger and the believers after the execution of the judgment was not specific to the Messenger himself. Another reason is that the expectation of the Messenger of God was not the separation and differentiation between the people of truth and falsehood, but rather the expectation of saving the believers from punishment, and this was not the main purpose of the speech, because the main aim of the speech is to warn and frighten the polytheists, not to bring good news of salvation to the Messenger of God and the believers

When God says, *Thus it is a must for Us* (ḥaqqan ʿalaynā) *to deliver the faithful*, this means that just as We saved the messengers and those who believed from previous nations when the punishment descended, so too We save the believers among you from this nation. It is incumbent upon Us to do that, indeed. His saying, *ḥaqqan ʿalaynā*, is an absolute object that stands for an omitted verb, and the use of the definite article for '*the faithful*' is to show that this word is referring to something already known, namely the believers of the Prophet's nation. This is a divine promise to the Prophet and the believers of his nation that God will save them.

It is not far-fetched to infer from His saying, *to deliver the faithful*, that there is a subtle indication that the Prophet, will not witness this divine judgment. Instead, it will transpire after he has passed away. This is suggested by the fact that God mentions the believers without including the Prophet, even though God mentions His messengers alongside the believers in previous instances. This might also be inferred from the repetition of God's saying, *Whether We show you a part of what We promise them, or take you away, they will be brought back to Us* (40:77) or other similar verses (example, 10:46, 13:40).

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is reported from Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Asadī that Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. al-Riḍā informed him that Yaḥyā b. Aktham wrote to him asking about certain issues: 'Tell me about God's saying, *So if you are in doubt about what We have*

sent down to you, ask those who read the Book before you ... (10:94), who is addressed in this verse? If the addressee is the Prophet, then he has doubted what God has revealed. And if the addressee is someone else, then this implies that the book was sent down to someone else.'

Mūsā said, 'So I asked my brother about that.' He said, 'As for His saying, *So if you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who read the Book before you ...*, the addressee is the Messenger of God, and he was not in doubt about what God had revealed. However, the ignorant ones said, "Why wasn't a messenger from among the angels sent to us?" He did not distinguish himself from others in terms of abstaining of food, drink, or frequenting the marketplace. So, God revealed to His Prophet: "*Ask those who read the Book before you* in the presence of the ignorant, whether God had sent a messenger before you who did not eat food, drink, and walk in the markets? Therein is an example for them."

He only said, *if you are in doubt*, even though the Prophet was not, in order to engage them. This is akin to the verse, *say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah's curse upon the liars'* (3:61). If He had said, 'Come, let us submit to mutual imprecation and bring the curse of God down upon you,' they would not have come for the mutual imprecation. After all, it is known that His Prophet faithfully carries out His message and he is not one of the liars. Similarly, the Prophet, knew that he was truthful in what he said, but he preferred to be impartial.'

Author's comment: al-Ṣadūq narrates this in *Maʿānī*, via his chain of narrators from Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, and this confirms what we have said in our commentary on the verse. It has come down in some narrations that this verse was revealed on the eve of the Prophet's Night Journey, and God instructed the Prophet to ask the spirits of those prophets who came before him. They are the ones who He meant when He said, *ask those who read the Book before you*. This meaning has also been narrated from al-Zuhrī, but it is not clear how this coheres with the wording of the verse.

(2) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Ibn Jarīr narrate from

Qatāda concerning the same verse: 'It was mentioned to us that the Messenger of God said, "I do not doubt, nor do I ask."'

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from al-Muʿammar that Imām al-Riḍā said, 'Surely God gave Jonah His commands, and he informed his people. Then, the punishment loomed over them, so they separated themselves from their children, and between their beasts and their offspring, then they cried out to God, so God lifted the punishment from them.'

Author's comment: We will discuss the story of Jonah in our commentary on some of the verses that detail this.[1]

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Lālkā'ī in his *Sunna* narrate from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: 'Precaution does not avert destiny (*al-qadr*) but supplication does avert it, that is the meaning of the verse, *except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace* (10:98).

Author's comment: A tradition with the same meaning is narrated from Ibn al-Najjār, from ʿĀ'isha, from the Prophet.

(5) In *al-Kāfī* and *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, it is narrated via a complete chain from Abū Baṣīr, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: '*Defilnement* (10:100) is doubt, and we never entertain doubts about our religion.'

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1 See *al-Mīzān* Eng. v. 33 under Ch. 37 (Ed.)

Verses 104–109

These verses draw the chapter to a close, expounding a variety of themes, and pointing broadly to monotheism, the Resurrection, and prophethood. They enjoin the Prophet to follow the Qur'an and be steadfast in awaiting God's judgment between him and his community.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ ۖ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

(10:104) *Say, 'O people! if you are in doubt about my religion* (dīn)*, then I do not worship those whom you worship besides Allah. Rather I worship only Allah, who causes you to die, and I have been commanded to be among the faithful,*

We have already explained more than once that *dīn* ('religion') denotes the practice one follows in life to attain happiness therein. It also suggests the meaning of obedience, as in the verse, *and dedicate their religion to Allah* (4:146). Sometimes, the word *dīn* is also used in the sense of 'recompense' (*jazā'*).

When He commands the Prophet to say, *if you are in doubt about my religion*, this means: 'If you are in doubt about the path that I follow steadfastly. A person doubts the religion of another person only in the sense of whether the latter is steadfastly upon it, namely will he remain on that path and continue to follow it to its end? The idolaters had hoped for the Prophet to abandon his religion, and they occasionally hoped to divert him from it, so that they could escape his call to monotheism and the rejection of idol-worship.

Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse is: 'if you are in doubt whether I truly believe in and what I call towards and whether I am steadfast on it, or if you have doubts about my religion and what it is and you did not grasp the principles on which it is based, then I will make a clear statement about it, and that is that I do not worship your gods but I

worship God alone.'

When He says, *rather I worship only Allah, who causes you to die,* God singles out His attribute of causing death for mention because the idolaters used to worship their gods because they believed they needed these gods to repel harm and bring benefit. Death is something that everyone knows will certainly befall them, and it belongs solely to God. Therefore, if they really feel the need to be safe from harm, they must worship God Almighty.

More than that, when God highlights the fact that it is He who causes creatures to die, this has the suggestion of a veiled threat to them, because the earlier verses of this chapter clearly promised that they would suffer punishment, and the death of the idolaters is the appointed time of their punishment. This is supported by the fact that *rather I worship only Allah, who causes you to die*, is followed by the phrase, *and I have been commanded to be among the faithful*. This is because the salvation of the faithful from punishment is part of the promise that God has given them in the two previous verses: *Do they await anything except the like of the days of those who passed away before them … Then We shall deliver Our apostles and those who have faith. Thus it is a must for Us to deliver the faithful.*

Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse is: 'Know with certainty that I do not worship your gods. Rather, I worship God, who has promised to punish those of you who deny Him and promised to deliver the believers from harm, and He has commanded me to be among them just as He has commanded me to turn aside from the worship of false gods.

وَأَنْ أَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

(10:105) ***and that: "Set your countenance upon the religion, as a hanif, and never be one of the polytheists.***

This is part of what the Prophet is commanded to say in the previous verse, *Say, 'O people! if you are in doubt about my religion …*, following on from and *I have been commanded to be among the faithful…* (that is, 'I have been commanded to be among the faithful, and commanded "Set your countenance upon the religion, as a *hanif* …"'). We have already discussed the meaning of setting one's countenance upon the religion previously.

وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ ۖ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذًا

مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

(10:106) *Nor invoke besides Allah that which neither benefits you nor can do you any harm. For if you do so, then you will indeed be among the wrongdoers.'"*

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This is another prohibition against idol-worship after the previous one, and it explains that polytheism causes a person to be counted amongst the wrongdoers and, therefore, deserving of what God has promised them.

One of the subtleties of expression found in these verses is that when God mentioned invocation, He said, *that which neither benefits you nor can do you any harm*, but when He mentioned worship, He said, *those whom you worship besides Allah* (10:104). This is because worship naturally endows the object of worship with senses and a mind in the mind of the worshipper. Hence, it is appropriate to refer to it with something like 'those' (*alladhīna*), which is used for beings with knowledge and intellect. By contrast, even though the same should be true of invocation because it is a form of worship, God refers to the objects of invocation as 'that' (*mā*), which is more befitting for an inanimate object. This is because one might imagine that something with knowledge and intellect is capable of bringing benefit or inflicting harm. Therefore, God refers to the objects of invocation with the word '*that*' to indicate that they are inanimate and cannot be conceived of as causing either benefit or harm.

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In the expression itself, by which I mean His saying: *that which neither benefits you nor can do you any harm*, God also provides a rationale for the prohibition of calling upon beings other than God.

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَإِنْ يُرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ
لِفَضْلِهِ ۚ يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٧﴾

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(10:107) *Should Allah visit you with some distress, there is no one to remove it except Him; and should He desire any good for you, none can stand in the way of His grace: He grants it to whomever He wishes of His servants, and He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.*

This is a conditional statement, and it is a continuation of the

explanation in the previous verse. The meaning is: 'Do not call upon things other than God that can neither benefit nor harm you. In the event that God afflicts you with any adversity, no one can remove it but Him, and no one can repel the good He intends for you but Him, so He is the Dominant over all others, bestowing good upon His servants by His will and desire, and yet He is also Forgiving and Merciful, forgiving His servants' sins and showing them mercy. The fact that God is attributed with these noble qualities and the all others are devoid of them necessitates that He be worshipped and called upon exclusively.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٨﴾

(10:108) *Say, 'O mankind! The truth has already come to you from your Lord. Whoever is guided, is guided only for his own soul, and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment, and it is not my business to watch over you.'*

'The truth' is the Qur'an or the teachings it contains. This verse informs them that they are free to choose for themselves, without depriving them of choice, by explaining a reality, which is that the truth which has come to them is from His decree that whoever is guided to it, then they are guided and its benefit returns to them, and whoever strays from it, then they stray and their harm is upon themselves. So, they are free to choose for themselves what they like of benefit or harm, and the Prophet is not their guardian to avert from them what is against them. Thus, the verse implies the necessity of being guided to the truth, for in it lies their benefit.

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَاصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

(10:109) *And follow that which is revealed to you, and be patient until Allah issues judgment, and He is the best of judges.*

This verse commands the Prophet to follow what has been revealed to him and to be patient with whatever hardships and trials he encounters over the course of following this revelation. It promises that God Almighty will judge between him and the people, and He will not judge except in a way that will bring him joy. Thus, the verse includes a command to him

to remain steadfast in his calling to the truth, consolation for the suffering he endures while doing so, and a promise to him that there will be a good end in store for him.

The verse concludes (the Chapter) by invoking God's judgment, and it is this that the majority of the verses in this chapter intend to explain.

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(End of Chapter 10)

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Chapter 11

Sūrah Hūd

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Verses 1–4

This chapter, as is evident from its opening, ending, and the context in which its verses flow, clarifies the purpose of the Qur'an's numerous and varied verses, expounds the essence of their aims, and summarizes their contents.

It begins by recalling that it encompasses various religious teachings, such as the foundations of divine knowledge, noble human morals, and legal ordinances pertaining to the generalities of worship, transactions, and governance. Then it describes the breadth of the creation, such as the Throne, the Footstool, the Tablet, the Pen, the heavens, the earth, the angels, the jinn, the devils, plants, animals, and humans. It describes the beginning of creation and what will become of it, namely how it will be annihilated and return to God Almighty. This, of course, will be the Day of Resurrection, preceded by the world of the grave, which is also known as the Isthmus (*Barzakh*), then being brought before the Lord of the Worlds, the gathering, the questioning, the reckoning, the weighing, the testimony of witnesses, then the final judgment, then Paradise or Hell with their varying degrees and levels.

Next, the chapter expounds the connection between the creation of man, his deeds, and his consequent happiness or misery, bliss or wrath, and rank in heaven or depth in hell, and all of this is related to the divine promise and threat, warning and glad tidings, exhortation, good argument, and wisdom.

So, the Qur'anic verses, while containing details of these divine

teachings and religious truths, are founded on a single fundamental reality, which is the root from which all of them step. This is the foundation on which the edifice of religion is built. And this single truth is nothing other than the oneness of God, the monotheism of Islam, by believing that He, the Exalted, is the Lord of everything, with no other lord or lords besides Him, and submitting to Him from every angle, fulfilling the dues of His lordship, and having no fear in one's heart or submission in action except for Him, the Almighty.

This is the foundation upon which all the contents of Qur'anic ideas ultimately rest, whether doctrines or laws. No matter how complex or detailed, this single truth undergirds all of them.

The chapter illustrates this in a general way through the four verses with which it begins, before going into more detail. This detail is achieved through delivering warnings and giving good tidings, mentioning God's practice in dealing with His servants, recounting the stories of past nations, and the stories of the peoples of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot, Jethro, and Moses. It mentions the arrogance of their peoples in rejecting the divine call, spreading corruption on earth, and overstepping the bounds in their affairs. It describes what God has promised to those who believe and do good deeds, and what He has threatened to do to those who disbelieve and deny His signs. In the course of this discussion, the Qur'an clarifies the doctrines of monotheism, prophethood, and the Resurrection.

From the above, it becomes apparent why some scholars have said that this chapter has the same overarching concerns as the previous one, Sūrah Yūnus. Namely, the fundamentals of the beliefs of Islam in monotheism, prophethood, Resurrection, recompense, and doing righteous deeds, with the difference that it goes into detail what was only alluded to in Sūrah Yūnus about the stories of these messengers.

However, it is evident that these two chapters are, in fact, driven by two different objectives, neither of which refers back to the other. Sūrah Yūnus expounds God's practice of judging between His messengers and the nations who denied them, then it warns the Prophet's nation about the punishments that had befallen those before them. On the other hand, the present chapter illustrates that Qur'anic knowledge, when analyzed, all devolves from pure monotheism. Similarly, monotheism, when fully elaborated, provides us with the fundamental doctrines and practices of Islam.

The present chapter, as attested to by its verses, their contents, and the clear connection between them, is of Meccan provenance, and it was revealed in a single go. Some have reported that the exception was the verse, *lest you should disregard aught of what has been revealed to you* (11:12), which they say is Medinan.

Others have also singled out the verse, *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from its Lord …* (11:17), while others still suggest, *Maintain the prayer at the two ends of the day, and during the early hours of the night …* (11:114) as an exception. However, there is no textual evidence to support these claims, and the apparent continuity of the chapter indicates that it is entirely Meccan, from start to finish.

الر ۚ كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ ﴿١﴾

(11:1) *Alif, Lām Ra. A Book, whose signs have been made definitive* (uḥkimat āyātu-hu) *and then elaborated* (thumma fuṣṣilat)*, from One all-wise, all-aware,*

This verse juxtaposes definitiveness (*iḥkām*) with elaboration (*tafṣīl*), which means to separate the parts of something that are connected to one other, and to divide between things which are merged together. This suggests that the meaning of definitiveness is to connect some parts of a thing to its other parts and to attach one end to the other so that the whole becomes a single entity without divisions or fragments.

It is evident that when a book is characterized by definitiveness and elaboration in this sense, this means from the perspective of the ideas and content it carries, not from its mere wording or anything else. Now, the state of ideas when the terms definitiveness and elaboration, or unity and differentiation are applied to them differs from the state of existent entities when the same terms are applied. When multiple ideas can be traced back to a single idea, this idea is present in all of them as a matter of principle, and this principle is, in essence, these particulars in their generality, while these particulars are, this general principle in particular forms. All of this is obvious and beyond doubt.

Therefore, the verses of the Qur'an are first definitive (*muḥkam*) and then elaborated (*fuṣṣilat*). This means that, in spite of the diverse content and varying purposes, the meaning of the verses can be traced back to a

single fundamental meaning and a unified original purpose that is utterly free from multiplicity or disparity. In other words, there is not a verse in the Qur'an that aims for a particular purpose, save for the fact that it is an embodiment of this original purpose, which is its driving spirit and essential desideratum.

In spite of the variance of its verses and the division of its contents, this sacred text has but a single unified purpose. On one occasion it will elaborate a religious principle, on another a created affair, on a third a divine-law ruling, and so on and so forth. This is true whether it is descending from the principles of the religion (*uṣūl*) to their branches (*furūʿ*) or from these branches to their subsidiary branches (*furūʿ al-furūʿ*), its fundamental meaning and significance do not change, nor does it deviate from its original goal. This is the underlying reality which, through its elaboration, becomes manifest in each and every detail of Islamic beliefs, morals, and deeds, and whenever these are analyzed, they return to this essential spirit. That permeates throughout them and governs all of them.

Therefore, maintaining God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) in a manner befitting His exalted stature and majesty means in the realm of belief, for example, to affirm His beautiful names and lofty attributes. In the realm of ethics, it means to embody noble morals such as satisfaction, submission, bravery, chastity, generosity, and the like, and to avoid despicable traits. In the realm of deeds and actions, it means to perform righteous deeds and to refrain from what God has forbidden.

Or, you might say: Pure monotheism necessitates in each of the levels of beliefs, ethics, and deeds, what the divine Book has expounded. Likewise, each of these levels and their parts cannot be fulfilled without pure monotheism.

Therefore, it is clear that this verse occurs in the context of explaining how the particulars of the Qur'an's teachings and laws all return to a single principle. This means that when combined in every instance from the categories of beliefs, descriptions, and deeds, while maintaining the uniqueness of each instance, it produces a ruling particular to it from the Qur'anic rulings.

Thus, the following is apparent:

First, the phrase, 'A book' (*kitāb*) is the predicate of an implicit subject, whose meaning is 'this.' In other words, it means, 'This is *a book*...' What

is meant by *book* here is the Qur'an that we have in our hands, which is divided into chapters and verses. This does not contradict the idea, sometimes proposed by commentators, that this *book* is the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*) or the Qur'an as it exists in the Guarded Tablet. After all, the Qur'an as we recite it is identical with the what exists in the Tablet in the same way as the revelation is identical (*tanzīl*) with its interpretation (*ta'wīl*).

Second, the word 'then' (*thumma*) in His statement, *and then elaborated*, conveys the meaning of progression according to the arrangement of speech, rather than temporal delay. This is because the idea of temporal precedence becomes meaningless when we are discussing different meanings according to their primary or secondary nature, or their generality or specificity.

Also evident are the problems with the explanations some master exegetes have offered regarding the meaning of the verse. For example, there are some who say that it means that its verses have been made definitive, which means that none of them will be abrogated in the way that previous scriptures and religions have been abrogated. Then these were elaborated through the explanation of what is permissible and prohibited and all other laws.

In this reading, the absence of any abrogation must be taken to mean that these verses will not be abrogated by a book other than the Qur'an that comes after it, in the fashion that the Qur'an abrogated other scriptures. The fact that abrogation occurs between different Qur'anic verses themselves is not something which is open to doubt. However, there is no evidence for such a restriction in the verse.

Other commentators have said that the meaning of, *whose signs have been made definitive*, is that they were *made definitive* in the form of commands and prohibitions, *then elaborated* through divine promises of reward and warnings of punishment. However, this is an arbitrary reading that has no evidence to support it.

Some commentators have said that this means that its words have been made definitive by being composed in the most eloquent and rhetorically powerful style, to the extent of being beyond imitation. Then these words were elaborated through explanation and clarification. The problem with this point is similar to the previous one.

Still other commentators have said that its verses are definitive in the sense that they have been composed firmly and proficiently, without flaw or falsehood therein. They are elaborated in the sense that they follow one after another. The problem with this reading is that such an interpretation of *fuṣṣilat* is not linguistically common, unless we take it to mean division and multiplication, in which case it goes back to the meaning that we have already presented above.

This is similar to what some others have said, namely that the verses are definitive taken as a whole, then they were divided and revealed one after another in revelation, so that the human being can reflect and contemplate on their meaning.

However, for this reading it is more appropriate to mention the like of the verses: *Indeed We sent it down on a blessed night* (44:3); *We have sent the Qur'an in discrete parts so that you may read it to the people a little at a time, and We have sent it down piecemeal* (17:106);

These and other verses like them indicate that the Qur'an enjoys as status with God that is beyond human comprehension, then it was sent down to a level that people were capable of understanding and contemplating, taking into account the condition of ordinary human minds, as indicated by the verse, *By the Manifest Book: We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason, and indeed it is with Us in the Mother Book surely sublime and wise.*

Returning to the verse at hand, *A Book, whose signs have been made definitive and then elaborated*, it attributes definitiveness and elaboration to verses together. This is only in terms of their meanings. This shows that definitiveness and elaboration are both found in the meanings of the multitude of Qur'anic verses. Therefore, the Qur'an's verses have an aspect of unity and simplicity and another aspect of multiplicity and complexity. Understand that this corresponds with the meaning we have presented above, not to what was mentioned about the matter of interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and revelation (*tanzīl*).

Some commentators have said that definitiveness and elaboration means that some verses are general in their meaning, while others clarify their meaning. An example of this can be found in the verse found later in this chapter, *The parable of the two parties is that of one who is blind and deaf and one who sees and hears* (11:24). This verse is general in their

meaning, but then it is elaborated in the stories of the prophets Noah, Hūd, and Ṣāliḥ that follows it.

However, the problem with this reading is that the apparent meaning of the verse is that definitiveness and elaboration are united in terms of their referent. This means that the verses to which definitiveness refers are the same as the ones to which elaboration refers, not that some verses are definitive and that others are elaborated, which is what the above reading would entail.

... from One all-wise, all-aware: 'all-wise' (*al-ḥakīm*) and 'all-aware' (*al-khabīr*) are two of the divine names of action. The first signifies God's proficiency in creation, while the second points to His knowledge of the particular conditions of existent entities and of what is beneficial to them. The fact that these two divine names are invoked to explain the definitiveness of the Qur'an's verses and their elaboration shows that there is a relation between these names and these qualities of the verses.

أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّنِي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾

(11:2) *declaring: 'Worship no one but Allah. I am indeed a warner from Him to you and a bearer of good news.*

This is an explanation for the content of the first verse: *A Book, whose signs have been made definitive and then elaborated, from One all-wise, all-aware*. As the verse indicates that it is a Book from God with verses made definitive then elaborated, the central concern of its exposition is expounding these aspects.

It is evident that this book, which God Almighty revealed from Himself to His Messenger for him to recite to the people and to communicate to them, has an aspect of its discourse that is addressed to the Messenger, and another aspect of its discourse is addressed to the people through him. As for the aspect that is addressed to the Messenger, which he receives directly via divine revelation, it is to warn, to give good tidings, and to call people to certain things. This aspect is what was meant in the beginning of the Sūrah Yūnus, when God says, *We have revealed to a man from among themselves, 'Warn mankind, and give good news to the faithful that they are in good standing with their Lord'* (10:2).

As for the aspect of the Qur'anic discourse that is addressed to the

people, which the people receive through the mediation of the Messenger, it is the content he delivers to the people by reciting of the words of God to them as a divine message, namely, 'I call you to God with warnings and good tidings.' It is this aspect of the discourse that God was referring to when He said, *'Worship no one but Allah. I am indeed a warner from Him to you and a bearer of good news.'*

Therefore, this verse is part of God's speech, which explains the meaning of making the verses of the Qur'an definitive then elaborating them by narrating what the people hear from the Messenger's call when he recites the Book of God to them. These are not the words of the Messenger being related here, nor is this a transition from one form of address to another. Nor does it mean, 'I command you to *worship no one but Allah*...' or 'whose verses are elaborated so that you *do not worship anyone except Allah*...', which would make the phrase, '*worship no one but Allah*' a negation rather than a prohibition. The first phrase of the next verse, *Plead with your Lord for forgiveness, then turn to Him penitently ...* follows on from the phrase, *Worship no one but Allah ...*, which shows that '*worship no one but Allah*' is a prohibition, not a negation. This is an example of the Qur'an's profound eloquence.

Therefore, when He says, '*Worship no one but Allah ...*', this phrase is a call to monotheism in worship by prohibiting the worship of any deity other than God from among the deities taken as partners with God and restricting worship to Him alone.

وَأَنِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٣﴾

(11:3) *Plead with your Lord for forgiveness, then turn to Him penitently. He will provide you with a good provision for a specified term and grant His grace to every meritorious person. But if you turn your backs, indeed I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day.*

His saying, '*Plead with your Lord for forgiveness, then turn to Him penitently...*', is a command to seek forgiveness from God once they have

accepted Him as their Lord by rejecting the worship of all others. Then, He commands them to repent and return to Him by doing righteous deeds. All of this constitutes the natural path leading to nearness with God and proximity to Him, namely to reject the gods other than Him, then seek forgiveness and spiritual purification to enter the domain of His proximity, and then to turn to Him with righteous deeds.

Some scholars have said that the exegetical phrase, '*Plead with your Lord for forgiveness ...*' appears second because of the distinction between the two stages indicated by His saying, '*Worship no one but Allah ...*', which is the stage of monotheism through devoting one's worship to God alone, and His saying, '*Plead with your Lord for forgiveness, then turn to Him penitently ...*', which is the stage of righteous deeds, even if the latter is subsidiary to the former and the result of it.

Given that monotheism is the fundamental basis, and that seeking forgiveness and repentance are the subsidiary branches of it, warnings and glad tidings are mentioned after the mention of monotheism. The divine promise, found in His saying: '*He will provide you with a good provision ...*', is mentioned after the command to seek forgiveness and turn penitently to him. Thus, God says, '*Worship no one but Allah. I am indeed a warner from Him to you and a bearer of good news.*' This indicates that both the warning and the glad tidings refer back to, and depend upon, monotheism. Then, God says, *Plead with your Lord for forgiveness, then turn to Him penitently. He will provide you with a good provision ...*' This is because valuable effects and desirable outcomes can only be obtained from a thing after it is already complete in its self and fully realized in terms of its attributes, branches, and results. Even though monotheism is the sole basis of the religion, in spite of its breadth, its tree does not bear fruits unless it remains upright and branches and limbs sprout forth from its trunk. This is akin to the verse, *A good word is like a good tree: its roots are steady and its branches are in the sky. It gives its fruit every season by the leave of its Lord. Allah draws these parables for mankind so that they may take admonition* (14:24–25).

It appears that what is meant by *turn to him penitently* here is faith (*īmān*), as per the saying, *So forgive those who repent and follow Your way ...* (40:7). Therefore, it makes sense to join forgiveness (*istighfār*) to repentance (*tawba*), whereby repentance is joined to forgiveness by the particle *thumma* ('then'). This means: 'Give up worshipping idols and seek

forgiveness from God for the sins you have committed, then have faith in your Lord.'

Some commentators have said the meaning of this verse is to seek forgiveness and make that your goal, then achieve it through repentance. But this interpretation is not proficient and somewhat tortuous. Another interpretation put forth is that the verse means: seek forgiveness for your past sins and then repent to Him whenever you sin in the future. Yet another interpretation is that '*then*' in the verse is equivalent to 'and' because repentance and seeking forgiveness are one and the same.

He will provide you with a good provision for a specified term ...: A *specified term* refers to the time at which a person's life comes to an end, which they cannot overstep. Therefore the meaning of *a good provision* is the provision of the life of this world or, indeed, the worldly life itself, because God Almighty has referred to it as provision in several verses of the Qur'an. Therefore, *a good provision for a specified term* does not refer to anything more than a good worldly life.

Therefore, the meaning of His saying, *He will provide you with a good provision*, hinges on the assumption that *provision* here is an absolute object (*mafʿūl muṭlaq*). This is akin to saying, 'He will provide you with good provision in this worldly life.' The provision of life can only be considered 'good' if it drives a person towards the happiness that has been prepared for him, guiding them towards the human aspirations of enjoying worldly blessings in abundance, such as security, comfort, dignity, and nobility. This good life is the opposite of the wretched life referred to in His saying, *But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life* (20:124).

There is no goodness in the provision of worldly life and no abundance in livelihood for those who turn away from the remembrance of God and do not believe in their Lord. Some people may have an abundance of wealth and a high status on the earth, and may think that they have achieved all human aspirations. However, they are oblivious to the joy of truly believing in God and entering under His patronage (*wilāya*), which grants them a good human life, safe from the disgrace of an animalistic life governed only by greed, gluttony, predation, rivalry, and ignorance. The human soul that is truly free despises all aspects of life that are monopolized by vile, lowly souls, even if this aversion leads to humiliation, poverty, and all

forms of ugliness.

A good life for a righteous and free community is one that allows them to partake in the enjoyment of all the blessings of the earth that God created for them, sharing these in a spirit of compassion, cooperation, and solidarity among them, without competition or conflict. Each person seeks their own good and benefit in the welfare and benefit of their community, without worshipping themselves or enslaving others.

In summary, to enjoy the good life until a specified term refers to the individual enjoying the kind of life that is appreciated by human nature. This means moderation in material enjoyments in the light of useful knowledge and good deeds when related to an individual. When related to a community, this refers to the whole benefitting from the blessings of a good earthly life, with each individual attaining what they can through their own efforts and striving in a society that is united and does not have disputation or conflict among its members.

... and grant His grace (faḍla-hu) *to every meritorious person* (kulla dhī faḍl)*: faḍl* ('grace') literally means an excess or an increase. And when *faḍl* in *every meritorious person* is attributed to those individuals who possess it, this might imply—as some have suggested—that the pronoun 'his' in '*His grace*' actually refers back to the *meritorious person* rather than to God. Merit and increase are relative concepts that can only be established by comparing one thing to another and associating it with it.

Therefore, the meaning is as follows: 'God rewards each person who exceeds others in their moral virtues, righteous deeds, and special qualities with a more abundant recompense, gifting them the joy of such increase without nullifying their rights, depriving them of their merit, or granting it to others.' This is a principle that stands in stark contrast to what we observe in non-religious societies, even those that are considered civilized. From the dawn of humanity and the establishment of various types of societies, be they primitive or sophisticated, humanity has been divided into two categories: an arrogant and dominating class, and a humiliated, enslaved, oppressed class. This imbalance and disparity can only be rectified by the religion of monotheism.

The monotheistic religion is the only tradition that reserves divinity and sovereignty for God, equalizing the strong and the weak, the developed and the developing, the great and the small, black and white, and

male and female. It upholds principles stated in the Qur'an, such as: *O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you.* (49:13), and *I do not waste the work of any worker among you, whether male or female; you are all on the same footing* (3:195).

Moreover, the statement, *and grant His grace to every meritorious person*, pertains to the care and recognition of the virtue of each person, following the statement, *He will provide you with a good provision for a specified term*, implying the enjoyment of everyone.

This indicates:

Firstly, the first phrase implies a general provision that is shared among all members of the society or, put differently, the good public life of society. The second phrase refers to the advantages that some individuals receive in exchange for the virtue they possess individually.

Secondly, the first phrase refers to the enjoyment of worldly life, while the second points towards the granting of rewards in the hereafter in exchange for good deeds performed by an individual, or the giving of each meritorious person their due in this life and the hereafter. It grants each individual who excels in worldly matters what their excellence entails in terms of advantages in life, assigning each virtuous person the position that is due to them based on their individual virtues and deeds. It does this without equating the superior and the inferior in religion, ignoring people's unique characteristics, or nullifying their differing ranks and positions in their societal endeavors. Hence, the active worker is not equated with the lazy, nor is the meticulous worker who exerts effort in their important field considered the same as the one who toys with trivial and insignificant work, and so on and so forth.

But if you turn your backs **(wa in tawallaw)*, indeed I fear for you*** **('alaykum)** ***the punishment of a terrible day:*** Note that while the Arabic reads *tawallaw* (which could be read as a third person masculine plural verb in the perfect tense, that is, 'if they turned away'), the meaning is clearly *tatawallaw* (a second-person masculine plural verb in the imperfect tense, 'if you turn away'), which is a form of direct address. The evidence for this is that the second part of this conditional phrase (*if... indeed...*) uses the form of a direct address in the prepositional phrase *'alaykum* (where *-kum*

is a second-person masculine plural pronoun, meaning 'you' addressed to a group). This is in addition to the multiple instances of direct address that occur in the previous verses. Therefore, the claim that the verb *tawallaw* is actually a third person masculine plural verb in the perfect tense ('if they turned away', see above) should be ignored.

Some commentators have put forth unusual readings of this verse. For instance, in reference to the verse, *He will provide you with a good provision for a specified term* (11:3), one has said: 'The verse indicates that the Muslim community will be saved from the divine punishment of annihilation, as we explained in our commentary on the previous chapter, Sūrah Yūnus.'

However, I am uncertain as to how a commentator could infer this from the verse. Perhaps he has based his reading on the verse's apparent stipulation that the community would enjoy a good life without being annihilated if they believed in God and His signs. While belief spread and Islam became widespread in the world, it is known that the Messenger was sent to all humankind, and the majority of them did not believe in him. It is also not the case that all those who professed faith were free of hypocrisy, with faith permeating from their outward appearance to their inner selves, from their tongues to their hearts. Now, if the mere belief of a portion of the community, despite the disbelief of others, sufficed to fulfil the condition and avert the punishment of annihilation, it would have sufficed for the nations of Noah and Hūd and others as well. They called their nations to what Muḥammad, called them to and set the same conditions for them. However, God still sent down the punishment of annihilation upon all of them, and it was just upon God to aid the believers.

In the text of the Qur'an, God recounts Noah's words to his people as part of his call, '*Plead to your Lord for forgiveness. Indeed He is all-forgiver. He will send for you abundant rains from the sky, and aid you with wealth and sons, and provide you with gardens and provide you with streams'* (71:10–12). Likewise, we read the Prophet Hūd's words, '*'O my people! Plead with your Lord for forgiveness, then turn to Him penitently: He will send copious rains for you from the sky, and add power to your* (present) p*ower. So do not turn your backs* (on Him) a*s guilty ones*' (11:52). God also mentions the collective message of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and those who came after them, "*'Is there any doubt about Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth?! He calls you to forgive you a part of your sins, and grants you*

respite until a specified time' (14:10).

Regarding the commentator's statement: 'as we explained in our commentary on the previous chapter, Sūrah Yūnus', when we look there we find nothing more than a claim devoid of evidence. We have already discussed in our own commentary on that chapter that its verses explicitly state that God will judge among this nation and its Prophet. God will punish them and save the believers. This is the unchangeable divine order of things that has been instituted with regard to His servants.

إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾

(11:4) *To Allah will be your return, and He has power over all things.*

This verse occurs in the context of providing a rationale for what has gone before it about the Resurrection, namely the verse, *but if you turn your backs, indeed I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day* (11:3). Meanwhile, the verse's coda, *and He has power over all things* is intended to eliminate any doubts that the audience's hearts might entertain about the possibility of Resurrection after undergoing death. Therefore, the meaning is: 'If you turn away from devotedly worshipping Him and disavowing all partners to Him, then surely I fear that you will encounter the punishment of a terrible day. That day is the Day of Resurrection, which comes after death, because your return is to God, and God is capable of all things, including reviving you after death. So, beware of dismissing this possibility.'

Therefore, the verse implies that the 'terrible day' (*yawm kabīr*) mentioned to in the previous verse is the Day of Judgement. Al-Qummī narrated in his *Tafsīr* that the punishment of the terrible day refers to the Smoke and the Cry.

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Verses 5–16

This section of verses recounts the words and deeds of the idolaters in response to the Prophet's claim of receiving divine revelation and to the verses of the Qur'an that were sent down to him, before responding to them with conclusive arguments.

For example, it mentions how they belittled God by asking, 'What is keeping the punishment back from us?' Or 'why has no treasure been sent down to him?', 'Why has no angel been sent with him?' and claiming, 'He has fabricated the Qur'an!' These verses contain other insights besides these as well.

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ يَثْنُونَ صُدُورَهُمْ لِيَسْتَخْفُوا مِنْهُ ۚ أَلَا حِينَ يَسْتَغْشُونَ ثِيَابَهُمْ
يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ۝٥

(11:5) ***Look! They fold up*** (yathnūn) ***their breasts to hide from him*** (li-yastakhfū min-hu). ***Look! When they draw their cloaks over their heads, He knows whatever they keep secret and whatever they disclose. Indeed He knows best whatever is in the breasts.***

The verb *thanā* (*yathnūn*, 'fold up') means to bend something back onto itself. In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes:

> 'The original meaning of *thanā* is 'to attach' (*ʿaṭf*). From this is derived the word *ithnān* ('two'), because you have two of a thing when you join one to another; from this is also derived *thanā'* ('praise') because when you praise someone you attach positive qualities to them; from this is also derived *istithnā'* ('exception'), because it means to attach one thing to another by removing it from it.' He also says, '*Istikhfā'* ('to hide') means to try to conceal something. The same is true of *istighshā'* ('to cover').'

So when God says, *They fold up their breasts to hide from it*, this means that they turn their chests backwards and lower their heads to hide from the Book, meaning to keep themselves from hearing it when it is being recited. In reality, this means that they are trying to hide from the Prophet

and avoid being in his presence when he is reciting the Qur'an to them to convey its message, so that they do not have to respond to his arguments.

Look! When they draw their cloaks over their heads, He knows whatever they keep secret and whatever they disclose: This suggests that they used to cover their heads with their garments when hiding by folding their chests. God mentions this and informs them that He knows whatever they conceal and whatever they reveal at that time, so hiding does not avail them from listening to the Qur'an and God knows them in their private and public lives.

Some commentators have said that what is meant by their wrapping themselves in their garments is their covering themselves in their homes at night when they lie in their beds to sleep, which is the most hidden and private state a person can be in. In this case, the meaning of the verse is: 'They fold up their chests to hide from this Book when it is recited to them, but God knows them in private and in public and even in the most hidden state they can be in, which is when they cover themselves with their garments for sleep.' And this reading of the verse is not without merit.

This is what the context implies about the meaning of the verse, and other meanings that do not match the context have also been proposed for it. For example, some have said that the pronoun 'it' in *They fold up their breasts to hide from <u>it</u>* refers back to God, or to the Prophet. Others have said that *they fold up their breasts* means 'they fold up their hearts in disbelief.' Still others have said it means 'they fold up their hearts in enmity to the Prophet.' However, these are all far-fetched meanings for the verse.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ۚ كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٦﴾

(11:6) *There is no animal* (dābba) *on the earth, but that its sustenance lies with Allah, and He knows its abode and its temporary place of lodging. Everything is in a manifest Book.*

According to the Arabic lexicons, the term *dābba* ('animal') generally refers to anything that moves. However, the term is often used to refer to specific types of creatures. The context of the verse necessitates a more general interpretation, as the discourse is intended to demonstrate the vastness of God's knowledge, as it follows on from His saying in the previous

verse: *When they draw their cloaks over their heads, He knows whatever they keep secret and whatever they disclose. Indeed He knows best whatever is in the breasts* (11:5).

This explanation, namely that God must provide for each and every creature, is intended to demonstrate the breadth of His knowledge, that encompasses each and every creature in all of its states of being. This, in turn, suggests that the phrase, *He knows its abode and its temporary place of lodging* is, in essence, an explanatory clause for His saying, *its sustenance lies with Allah*. Therefore, the meaning is that every creature on earth relies on God for sustenance, and they would not exist without it. God, the Exalted, knows and is aware of each creature's condition, wherever it may be. If it resides in a fixed abode, like a whale in the water or a shellfish embedded in the earth, its provision is there. If it leaves its dwelling place and has a temporary place of lodging from which it will eventually return to the former, like a bird in the air, a traveller away from home, or an embryo in the womb, its provision is there. In summary, He, the Exalted, is aware of the condition of each and every creature on earth. And how could He not be, when He is responsible for their provision? The sustenance only reaches the recipient with the knowledge of the Provider of this sustenance about the recipient and His knowledge of the recipient's permanent or temporary, stationary or transitory place of residence.

From this, it appears that what is meant by 'abode' (*mustaqarr*) and 'temporary place of lodging' (*mustawda'*) is the place where the creature settles as long as it is a moving being on earth, living a worldly life, and the place where it dwells, then leaves, and departs from. However, what some interpreters have said is that what is meant by *abode* and *mustaqarr* are its places during its life and after its death, or that they refer to loins and wombs, or that they refer to its homes on earth when they actually exist and their existence as raw materials when they were only potentially existent. However, all of these meanings are far removed from the context of the verse, except if His saying, *and He knows its abode and its temporary place of lodging*, is considered an independent statement in its own right and not an explanation of what precedes it.

Interested readers can refer to our commentary on the verse, *It is He who created you from a single soul, then there is the (enduring) abode and the place of temporary lodging* (6:98), which will shed further light on the

meaning of the verse under discussion here.

As for His saying, ... *but that its sustenance lies with Allah* ..., this indicates that God is responsible for providing for His creatures. It is repeatedly many times in the Qur'an that provision (*rizq*) is the sole purview of God and that it is something that the creatures can expect from Him. For example, He says: *Who is it that may provide for you if He withholds His provision?* (67:21); *Indeed it is Allah who is the All-provider, Powerful, All-strong* (51:58); *And in the sky is your provision and what you are promised. By the Lord of the sky and the earth, it is indeed the truth, just as you speak* (51:22–23).

There is no problem in affirming that there is something due from God to others, since He is the one who has bound Himself to that obligation without anyone else's intervention. There are many such parallels for this in the Qur'an. For example, He says: *He has made mercy incumbent upon Himself* (6:12); ... *and it was a must for Us to help the faithful* (30:47).

Rational contemplation supports this view, because sustenance is what maintains the existence of a living creature, and since its existence emanates from the bounty of His generosity, what it relies on for sustenance is from Him as well. And, since there is no partner with Him in creating it, there can be no partner with Him in what its existence depends on, meaning its sustenance (*rizq*).

We have already discussed the meaning of the phrase 'manifest Book' (*kitāb mubīn*) in our commentary on verses 6:59 and 10:61, so let readers refer there.[1]

وَهُوَ الَّذِى خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتَ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ
الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾

(11:7) *It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days—and His Throne was upon the waters—that He may test you: which of you is best in conduct. Yet if you say, 'You will indeed be raised up after death,' the faithless will surely say, 'This is nothing but plain magic.'*

1 See *al-Mīzān* Eng. v. 13 (Ed.)

We will present the full account of the creation of the heavens and the earth based on the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and the explanations of the Infallibles in our commentary on Sūrah Fuṣṣilat.

In short, the apparent meaning of the phrase, *in six days*, and the phrase, *and His Throne was upon the waters*, is that God's description of the creation of the heavens (*samāwāt*—note that this word is plural) along with the earth in six days refers to the layers of the visible material creation that exist above our earth, as whatever is above something and overshadows it is a *samā'* for it—this is what scholars have said. And the concepts of 'above' and 'below' are always in relation to something else.

These are layers of the material creation that exist above our earth and envelop it. The earth is spherical in shape as suggested by His saying, Exalted is He: "*He draws the night's cover over the day, which pursues it swiftly* (7:54).

The first heaven (*samā'*) is the one adorned by the lamps of stars and planets; it is the layer that contains them or it is above them and is adorned by them, like a ceiling is adorned with lanterns and chandeliers. As for what is above this nearest heaven, there is nothing in His speech describing its characteristics other than what is in His saying, *He created seven heavens in layers* (67:3), and His saying, *Have you not seen how Allah has created seven heavens in layers, and has made therein the moon for a light, and the sun for a lamp* (71:16). This indicates that they are stacked one above the other.

In His description of their creation, God has said that these heavens were initially interwoven, and then He split them apart. They became scattered and disintegrated, then He gathered and stacked them. They were initially smoke, and He made them into heavens. See the verses: *Have the faithless not regarded that the heavens and the earth were interwoven and We unravelled them, and We made every living thing out of water? Will they not then have faith?* (21:30) *Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the earth, 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!' They said, 'We come heartily.' Then He set them up as seven heavens in two days, and revealed in each heaven its ordinance* (41:11–12).

This indicates that the creation of the heavens was completed in two of the six days of creation. Now, the term 'day' (*yawm*) denotes a measurable unit of time, and it is not necessary for a 'day' in all circumstances and contexts to correspond to a day on earth, which is derived from one rotation

of its axial motion. For example, one lunar day, as related to this Earth, is equivalent to approximately twenty-nine and a half days on Earth. The use of the term 'day' to denote a period of time is common in discourse.

Therefore, what this means is that God created the seven heavens in two periods of time. Similarly, about the Earth, He has said that He *created the earth in two days... and ordained therein its means of sustenance in four days* (41:9-10). Therefore, in this verse, He tells us that the earth was created in two days, which are epochs or stages, and that He set up its sustenance in four days, which refers to the four seasons.

The conclusions we draw from these verses is, firstly, that the creation of the heavens and the earth as we see them today in their form and shape was not from absolute nothingness. Instead, they previously existed as an undifferentiated, compound, mass of material. Some parts of this matter were separated from others and made into the earth in two periods of time. The sky was initially smoke, which was separated and arranged into seven heavens, also within two periods of time.

Secondly, whatever living things we perceive are made from water. Therefore, water is the substance of life.

Given what we have explained, the meaning of the verse presently under discussion becomes clear. When He said, *It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days*, the intended meaning of their creation is the gathering of their components, their division, and their splitting from whatever else was mixed with them from this undifferentiated matter. The original creation and fusion in the heavens and the earth were completed in two days each, leaving two remaining days of the six for the remainder of the creation.

As for when God says, *and His Throne was upon the waters*, this is an adverbial statement, meaning that, on the day of the creations of the heavens, His Throne was upon the waters. The fact that the Throne was upon the waters on that day is a metaphor for His Exalted Sovereignty being established upon this water, which is the substance of life. Therefore, the Throne of God is a symbol of His Sovereignty. Its establishment upon a location signifies the establishment of His Sovereignty over it. Similarly, His being upon the Throne implies encompassing Sovereignty and its management.

As for those who say that the intended meaning of the Throne (*'arsh*)

is a structure, they derive this meaning from the verse, *and the trellises that they erect* (16:68). However, this explanation does not make sense here.

... that He may test you **(li-yabluwa-kum)*: which of you is best in conduct:*** The *lām* in *li-yabluwa-kum* is purposive. To test someone is to submit them to examination or trial. The phrase, *which of you is best in conduct*, expounds the nature of this test in the form of a question, meaning that He created the heavens and the earth in the form that He did for the purpose of testing you and distinguishing those who do good from those who do bad.

It is known that a test or trial is an action carried out for a purpose other than itself, namely to distinguish good from bad, virtuous from vicious, righteous from wicked. Equally, it is only necessary to distinguish good from bad because of the consequences they bear in terms of reward or punishment. Likewise, divine recompense is intended to fulfil God's true promise. That is why we find Him mentioning each of these consequential matters as a purpose of creation. For example, regarding trials being the purpose of creation, He says: *Indeed We have made whatever is on the earth an adornment for it that We may test them: which of them is best in conduct?* (18:7);

Regarding the discernment and distinction, He has said: ... *so that Allah may separate the bad ones from the good* (8:37);

While on the subject of divine recompense, He says: *Allah created the heavens and the earth with reason, so that every soul may be requited for what it has earned, and they will not be wronged* (45:22);

Concerning the fulfilment of His promise, He says: *We will bring it back as We began the first creation—a promise binding on Us. That indeed We will do* (21:105).

And other such verses. He says regarding worship being the purpose in the creation of the jinn and humans, *I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship Me* (51:56).

Now, considering righteous deeds or the virtuous human as the purpose of creation does not contradict the fact that creation encompasses other purposes as well. After all, man is truly one of those purposes. This is because the unity and connectivity governing the world allows for each type of being to be considered a purpose of creation. Since it is the result of the connection and the outcome of the general association between its

constituent parts, it is possible to speak about each type of creation as the intended objective of the creation of the heavens and the earth, since the creation of these leads to its existence.

However, the human being is the most perfect and well-crafted of the material creations contained in the heavens and the earth. If he flourishes in terms of his knowledge and good deeds, he becomes the best and the highest in status and degree compared to all other creatures. Some creations, like the heavens, have been given a more powerful creation than him, as God has said. It is evident that the perfection of creation is its intended purpose when it includes the imperfect. Therefore, we consider the different stages of human existence from sperm, to fetus, to childhood, among others, as precursors to the existence of a healthy, flourishing human being, and so on.

Based on this, it becomes clear that the best individuals among humans, if there are those who are absolutely the best, are the true purpose behind the creation of the heavens and the earth. The wording of the verse also indicates this. For example, when He says, *which of you is best in conduct*, this implies that the aim is to distinguish who is best in deed from all others, regardless of whether they are virtuous or wicked. Thus, whoever's deeds are better than the rest, whether the rest are virtuous and their deeds are merely inferior to his, or whether they are wicked, the distinguishing of the one who is best in deeds from all others is the intended purpose of creation. Therefore, this explains the significance of the *ḥadīth qudsī*, in which God addresses His Prophet, saying, 'Were it not for you, I would not have created the firmament' (*law lā-ka lammā khalaqtu al-aflāk*)—this is because he is the best of all creation.

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, we read: 'Al-Jubā'ī said: "The verse indicates that he existed before the creation of the heavens, the earth, and the angels. This is because there is no point in creating the throne upon the waters unless it provides some benefit to a morally accountable being capable of inferring from it, so there must be a living, morally accountable being at that time." 'Alī b. 'Īsā, however, said: "There is nothing to say that informing the Qur'an's audience of the creation of the throne upon the waters would not benefit morally accountable beings and, thus, there is no need for what al-Jubā'ī has said." This was the preferred view of Sayyid al-Murtaḍā.'

Author's comment: Their assertions are based on the Muʿtazilī doctrine that God's actions follow a purpose and aimed at producing good

and beneficial results, even if that involves creating things to inform morally accountable beings about them, so that they may contemplate and believe in Him, hence accomplishing a benefit for them. In our previous discussions, we have already established that God Almighty is not governed by anything, nor is He influenced by anything other than Himself, be it a benefit or any other supposed concept, and that everything other than Him is created by Him and subject to His command, even if it is an objective existent reality. The decision belongs only to God, and God is the Creator of everything.

These aspects of goodness and benefit—which are what motivate us to act—exist in objective reality and affect us insofar as we are active agents in pursuit of a happy life. God, however, is far superior to that. These aspects of goodness and benefits are general rules derived from the cosmic order and the relations that exist between created entities. It is crucial to acknowledge that the universe and the order within it are His creation. It is quite impossible for a derived concept to precede the action from which it is derived then go beyond it and even surpass the agent who originated it.

As for the rationale given for the creation of the heavens and the earth in the verse, *that He may test you: which of you is best in conduct*, and its many parallels in the Qur'an, they are rationales that are based on the benefits and advantages that derive from an action. God has informed us that His actions are never devoid of goodness, as He described Himself as the one *who perfected everything that He created* (32:7). God is the epitome of goodness; there is no evil in Him, and there is no ugliness with Him. Therefore, nothing evil or ugly ever originates from Him.

The preceding discussion does not necessitate that the meaning of 'good' is 'whatever emanates from God' or 'whatever He has commanded, even if reason finds it repugnant', nor that 'evil' is 'whatever does not emanate from Him' or 'whatever He has prohibited, even if reason finds it to be good and just.' This claim is rejected by verses such as "*Indeed Allah does not enjoin indecencies* (7:28).

Yet if you say, 'You will indeed be raised up after death,' the faithless will surely say, 'This is nothing but plain magic': Insofar as the previous statement, *that He may test you*, points to the Resurrection, this passage calls attention to the disbelievers' response to the Prophet's mention of the afterlife by accusing him of being a magician of speech.

The apparent meaning of the verse is that they, just as they dismissed the eloquence and rhetoric of the Qur'an as magic, so too did they dismiss as magic the realities conveyed by the Qur'an and the Prophet which their minds refused to accept, such as the teaching of resurrection after death. Therefore, this represents the extent to which they were willing to lie about the Qur'an and the depths of their obstinacy and defiance towards truth, as they went beyond labelling its eloquent language as magic, to actually dismissing its truthful ideas as magic.

It is important to consider that 'magic' (*siḥr*) here might not mean literal magic in the sense of sorcery, but in the figurative sense of deception and obfuscation by presenting falsehood in the guise of truth. However, this reading does not align with the apparent meaning of God's words in a similar context: *Say, 'In whose hand is the dominion of all things, and who shelters and no shelter can be provided from Him, if you know?' They will say, 'to Allah.' Say, 'Then how are you being deluded?'* (23:89).

وَلَئِنْ أَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ مَعْدُودَةٍ لَيَقُولُنَّ مَا يَحْبِسُهُ ۗ أَلَا يَوْمَ
يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(11:8) ***And, surely, if We defer their punishment until a certain time, they will surely say, 'What holds it back?' Look! On the day it overtakes them it shall not be turned away from them, and they will be besieged by what they used to deride.***

Note the use of particles of emphasis at the beginning of the verse. The meaning is: 'I swear that if we delay the punishment these disbelievers deserve, they would mockingly say, "What is holding back this promised punishment from us, and why has it not descended upon us or afflicted us?"'

This shows that what they heard from God's speech or the Prophet's speech a threat of inescapable punishment, and if God delays this punishment as a mercy for them, they deride it and mock it, by asking, '*What holds it back?*' This is supported by the following statement, *Look! On the day it overtakes them it shall not be turned away from them, and they will be besieged by what they used to deride.*

This supports the idea that Sūrah Hūd was revealed after Sūrah Yūnus, on account of the content of the latter, beginning with the verse, *There*

is a messenger for every nation; so when their messenger comes, judgment is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged.

In the phrase, *until a certain time* (ilā umma maʿdūda), the term *umma* means 'time' (and not 'nation'), as per the verse, *Said the one of the two who had been delivered, remembering after a long time* (baʿd umma) (12:45).

Alternatively, *umma* could be used here in the sense of a group of people (meaning then, 'for the sake of a specified nation'). God has promised to support this religion with a group of righteous people who would not allow anything to impair their faith. And when this happens, the believers will be able to follow the religion which God has approved for them. In this regard, He has said, *Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, (who will be) humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, waging jihad in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer* (5:54); *Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me* (24:55).

This interpretation is also acceptable.

Another reading of this verse is that *umma* here refers to a group of people who will be brought forth by God after these disbelievers, but they will persist in their denial of the truth, so God will punish them by eradicating them from the face of the earth, just as it happened to the people of Noah. Alternatively, *umma* could refer to the people who come after these disbelievers, and they will persist in disobeying God so that God brings down the Day of Judgement upon them.

However, both of these readings are unfounded, as they both rest on the assumption that the ones being punished are not the disbelievers who are mocking God and the Prophet, while the apparent meaning of God's words, *On the day it overtakes them it shall not be turned away from them, and they will be besieged by what they used to deride*, indicates that those who will be punished are the ones who mocked God with their words, *'What holds it back?'*

On the day it overtakes them it shall not be turned away from them, and they will be besieged by what they used to deride: This serves the

response to their mockery, *What holds it back?'* And this mockery was their response to the threat of divine punishment. In short, what they are saying is: 'If the punishment you threaten us with is genuine (and not a fabrication you have contrived), there would be no reason to hold it back, for we will not give up our disbelief nor turn aside from our religion. Therefore, there is no reason to delay it. On the contrary, you should be hastening to punish us! This shows that your threat is false.'

God responds to this by saying that the punishment will indeed befall them, and on that day, there will be no one who can deflect it. This torment, which they mock, will ultimately encompass them.

Based on what has been previously mentioned, it appears that the punishment they are threatened with is worldly; it will envelop them and descend upon them in addition to the torment of the Hereafter. Therefore, this verse and one before it each describe something that the disbelievers imagine in their ignorance. The previous verse mentions that when they are reminded of the Resurrection and warned about the punishment that awaits them on the Day of Judgement, they say: '*This is nothing but plain magic*.' The present verse mentions that when God delays their punishment for a time and they are informed of this, they mockingly say: '*What holds it back?*'

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَئُوسٌ كَفُورٌ ﴿٩﴾

(11:9) *If We let man taste* (adhaqnā) *a mercy from Us, and then withdraw* (nazaʿnā-hā) *it from him, he becomes despondent* (yaʾūs)*, ungrateful.*

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes:

> 'Taste (*dhawq*) means to put something into one's mouth to ascertain its flavour. God refers to the granting of pleasures to human beings "tasting" because of how quickly they vanish like things that are tasted and then disappear. This is similar to the saying, "dreams of sleep are like a fleeting shadow." To withdraw something (*nazaʿ*) means to pull something from its place, to be despondent. *yaʾs*, (from which *yaʾūs* is derived) means to be certain that something desired will not occur, the opposite of this is hope.'

In this verse, God substitutes mercy (*raḥma*) for blessings to show

that the blessings He gives to humans are a form of mercy, which means to fulfil human needs without their having done anything to deserve this or without any obligation. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'If we grant man something of the blessings that he enjoys and then We withdraw it, he becomes hopeless and his despair intensifies to the point where he believes it is impossible that it will ever be restored to him, and he becomes ungrateful for our blessings, as if he views those blessings as his inherent right and does not believe they belong to Us. So, humans are prone to despairing about what is taken from them and being ungrateful.' Note that the term "man" is used in the verse, indicating the entire human race, to show that these characteristics is a trait of the human species.

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نَعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَّاءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي ۚ إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(11:10) *And if We let him have a taste of blessings* (naʿmāʾ) *after adversities have befallen him, he will surely say, 'All ills have left me.' Indeed he becomes an exultant braggart,*

Al-Ṭabrisī says in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*:

> 'Blessings (*naʿmāʾ*) are favors whose effects are visible in the one who receives them, while adversities (*darrāʾ*) are visible sources of harm. This is because these two words are conjugated according to the same pattern as words such as *hamrāʾ* ('red') and *ʿaynāʾ* ('verdent'), which concern outward and visible states. 'Joy' (*faraḥ*) and 'delight' (*surūr*) are similar in that they represent an openness of heart to what one enjoys, the opposite of which is sorrow... a braggart (*fakhūr*) is someone who frequently boasts and extols his own virtues, which is considered a negative trait when mentioned without any context because it implies behaving arrogantly towards those who do not deserve such treatment.'

In this context, the meaning of 'ills' (*sayyiʾāt*) is the calamities and disasters that afflict man, causing him distress. The meaning then is: 'If We bless him with prosperity after adversity, he will certainly say, "My troubles have left me."' This implies a belief that those hardships and adversities will not return once they have disappeared, and will not befall him again after they have been lifted.

The phrase, *indeed he becomes an exultant braggart*, provides a rationale for his saying, *'All ills have left me.'* This is because he exults and continues to exult as he tastes blessings after adversity. On the other hand, if he recognized that the blessings he enjoys might vanish and could not be counted on to remain, and that he doesn't have control over them but someone else does, and that it's possible for the ills he has experienced to return, he wouldn't exult in this way. For there is no joy in transient and unsettled matters.

Moreover, he boasts about the blessings he has been given over others. However, a person cannot boast unless it is about an honor or virtue that they possess. So, it is because he sees his blessings as matters under his control, things that others cannot take from him, and that no one cannot bring back the ills he previously suffered, that he boasts and goes to extremes in boasting.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

(11:11) *excepting those who are patient and do righteous deeds. For such there will be forgiveness and a great reward.*

God points out the typical human reactions to hardship and disaster, which are despair and ingratitude, and to prosperity and blessings, which are joy and boasting. The implication is that humans have a short-sighted perspective, seeing only what is immediately before them and being bewildered by anything beyond that. If a blessing is taken from a person, he doesn't believe it will ever return and forgets that it was from God, who has the power to restore it to him if He wills. If he remembered that all blessings were ultimately from God, this would encourage him to be steadfast in adversity and to turn his heart to God in hope and supplication. On the other hand, if a blessing is restored to him after he has been deprived of it, he believes that it is his rightful due, so he rejoices and boasts, failing to see God's hand in it to give thanks to Him for it, and does not restrain his joy or cease extolling his own superiority over others.

However, God exempts a group of humans from this general pattern, describing them with the phrase, *those who are patient and do righteous deeds*, and then promises them a great reward with the phrase, *For such there will be forgiveness and a great reward.* This is because escaping from

this blameworthy tendency is only possible for those who are steadfast in times of adversity—so that their distress does not drive them to despair and ingratitude—and who do good deeds—by thanking God for removing adversity and replacing it with blessings—and using His blessings in ways that please Him and benefit His creatures, so that feelings of self-sufficiency do not give way to joy and boasting.

These are the ones who are truly saved, their Lord will forgive them by erasing traces of the reprehensible tendency towards short-sightedness and replacing it with praiseworthy qualities, and they will have great forgiveness and reward from their Lord.

The verse provides evidence that patience combined with good deeds is inseparable from faith, as it promises these patient ones forgiveness and great reward, and forgiveness is not granted to idolaters. God says, *Indeed Allah does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him* (4:116).

The promise of forgiveness and a great reward, exactly as mentioned in this verse, is also given to the believers in the verse, *There is a severe punishment for the faithless, but for those who have faith and do righteous deeds there will be forgiveness and a great reward* (35:7), and in the verse, *Indeed for those who fear their Lord in secret there will be forgiveness and a great reward* (67:12).

The connection of these three verses with what precedes them is clear, as the discussion in the previous verses was leading up to the disbelief of the disbelievers, their mockery of the promise of Resurrection, and their responding to the threat of punishment with ridicule. God points out that they, in their natural state, do not believe that the blessings they have from God will ever come to an end due to the descent of punishment, nor will whatever miseries that have befallen them change into a pleasant life and the good enjoyments that God promised them at the beginning of the chapter.

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا
أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٢﴾

(11:12) *Lest you should disregard aught of what has been revealed to you, and be upset by it because they say, 'Why has not a treasure been sent down to him, or not an angel accompany him?' You are*

only a warner, and Allah is a trustee over all things.

Since the Prophet's message is supported by the Qur'an, clear signs, proofs, and decisive evidences, that no sane person could deny it and no human being with sense could reject or disbelieve in it, therefore, the Qur'an's account of the disbelief of the disbelievers and denial of the polytheists seems highly unlikely by nature. When an event is highly unlikely to occur, a person will often seek some explanation of why it has happened in order to avoid simply acknowledging that something improbable has come to pass.

This is the context in which the present verses must be understood. Taking into account what God has related about the disbelievers' denial and the idolaters rejection of what the Prophet brought to them in terms of the clear truth and divine message that were revealed to him, along with the clear evidences and arguments that could not be denied or rejected, God considers the issue from several perspectives to provoke reflection. For example, He says in the present verse, *Lest you should disregard aught of what has been revealed to you ...* and in the next one, *Do they say, 'He has fabricated it ... ?'*

It is as if to say: 'It is highly improbable that you guide them to the manifest truth and they hear My words from you, and then they do not respond to your call and deny the truth after it has become clear to them. Perhaps you have omitted some of what is revealed to you and failed to invite them to it, and that is why they have confronted you with denial? Or do they claim that the Qur'an is not the word of God, but rather it is a fabrication you have concocted in His name, and that is why they did not believe in it? If you have left out some of the revelation for fear that they might challenge you with the verses, remember, you are just a warner, and you have no control over what God wills. If they claim that it is a fabrication, then ask them to produce ten chapters like it, fabricated.'

From what has been previously discussed, it is evident that the tone of this verse is hypothetical, in light of the highly improbable nature of this outcome. In this case, every potential reason that might bring about the unlikely event is considered. This is analogous to the case of a king, some of whose weak subjects have rebelled against him. He sends one of his agents to call them to hear and obey and writes a letter that he commands his messenger to read to the rebels. The letter criticizes his subjects

for their rebellion and arrogance, for daring to take up arms despite their weakness and abasement and his strength, authority, and honor. Then the king receives a report that they rejected his messenger and the message he brought. So, the king writes a second letter, and commands that it be read to them. The second letter says to the messenger, 'perhaps you did not read my letter to them for fear that they might challenge you with something you cannot handle, or that they claim that the letter is not from me, but you have fabricated it. If the first is the case, you are just a messenger, and your only duty is to convey the message. If the second, then the letter is in my handwriting, written by my hand, sealed with my seal, and no one other than me can replicate that.'

Reflecting on this example shows that the tone conveyed by the second letter is one of improbability, and the purpose of mentioning the two possibilities—failing to deliver the full message and the claim of fabrication—is not to reprimand the messenger or give any serious consideration their claims of falsehood and trickery. Instead, these two possibilities are mentioned as a preliminary step to clarifying these doubts, namely that the messenger has no control over the matter in order to manipulate it, and there is no doubt or uncertainty in the message of the king.

Based on this reflection, it is obvious that when God says: *Lest you should disregard aught of what has been revealed to you, and be upset because they say...*, this doesn't seriously suggest that the Prophet has failed to convey God's message or that he should be reprimanded in any way. Nor is it intended to console him or soothe the feelings of sorrow or distress he experiences because of their disbelief and denial of the clear truth he has brought them. Instead, the speech is leading towards the words: *You are only a warner, and Allah is a trustee over all things*.

Some commentators have argued that the speech is intended to forbid the Prophet from feeling sorrow or distress due to the disbelief and denial of the idolaters, and that this prohibition is supposed to console him and give him peace of mind, similar to the verse: *And do not grieve for them, nor be upset by their guile* (16:127), and the verse,: *You are liable to imperil your life (out of distress) that they will not have faith. If We wish We will send down to them a sign from the sky before which their heads will remain bowed in humility* (26:3–4). However, this interpretation does not fit with the context of the verse.

It is also evident that His saying, *Lest you should disregard …*, and His saying, "*Do they say, 'He has fabricated it …?'* are two parts of a refutation and they are both connected together with what preceded them in the same way, as we have already mentioned.

The passage, *Lest you should disregard aught of what has been revealed to you …* says '*aught*' (in other words, 'some') because the preceding verses confirm that the Prophet has conveyed the message in general. So perhaps, this verse suggests to the Prophet, you have left out some of what We have revealed to you in the Qur'an, so you haven't recited it to them, so the truth is not completely unveiled to them, because you did not want them confront you with the denial and rejection that they have confronted you with anyway. This is because one part of the Qur'an clarifies another part, and one passage of it renders another more acceptable—the verses containing arguments clarify the verses containing claims, and verses of reward and punishment make people more likely to accept the truth through encouragement and warnings, while verses of stories and parables appeal to people's psyches and soften their hearts.

As for the phrase, 'and be upset by it because they say …' (*ḍā'iq bihi ṣadruka an yaqūlū* …, lit. 'and your chest should tighten because they say…'), al-Ṭabrisī says in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*:

> 'The word *ḍā'iq* ('tightened'—an active participle of the verb *ḍāqa*) here means the same as 'tight' (*ḍayq*—the infinitive of the same verb), but *ḍā'iq* is used here for two reasons: first, because it is more fitting in the context, and second, because of the assonance between it and the Arabic word 'disregard' (*tārik*—as both words share the same pattern of conjugation).'

It appears that the pronoun 'it' in 'by it' (*bihi*) refers back to *aught of what has been revealed to you*. Although some commentators have suggested that the pronoun actually refers to their statement, *Why has not a treasure been sent down to him…?* or to the fact that they are making such demands. This aligns better with the phrase, *because they say*, acting as a substitution (*badal*) for the pronoun in 'it.' However, our explanation aligns better with it acting as the object of the verb '*disregard*.' The implied meaning is: 'perhaps you would disregard this out of fear that they will say, "Why hasn't a treasure been sent down to him or an angel come with him?"'

The phrase, *You are only a warner* is a response to the impertinent demands of the idolaters, *Why has not a treasure been sent down to him, or not an angel accompany him?* God has repeatedly mentioned these demands of theirs in various contexts, sometimes focusing solely on the appearance of an angel and others adding more elements to it. For example, they sometimes demand that God Himself should appear to bear witness to the truthfulness of his message, or that the Prophet should have a heavenly garden from which to eat, or that a book should descend from the heavens that they all can read. God has responded to all of these demands in a similar way as here, stating that His messenger has only the message to deliver. Being a human messenger, it is not within his power to accede to their suggestions unless God wills it and authorizes a sign, as He has said elsewhere, *A messenger may not bring any sign except by Allah's permission* (40:78).

Then, after saying, *You are only a warner*, God adds, *and Allah is a trustee over all things*. This completes His response to their demands that the Prophet produce miracles in response to their whims. In other words, the Prophet is a human being like them, and he has not been commanded to do anything other than to deliver a warning, which is a message informing someone of danger. The direction and governance of all affairs, whether following their natural course or breaking the natural order of things, falls to God alone, so there is no basis for them to assign responsibility for these things to the Prophet when they are matters beyond his control.

This is because God is the creator of all things and their originator, and He is the one who manages everything according to its established order. There is nothing except that He is the initiator of its affair and its final destination, whether things are occurring naturally or breaking the natural order. He is the one who is entrusted with its matter and manages its affair, and so He is the trustee over all things. A trustee (*wakīl*) is someone who is entrusted with a matter and looks after it. Therefore, God Almighty is the trustee over all things.

Based on this, it is apparent that the statement, *and Allah is a trustee over all things*, when combined with, *You are only a warner*, serves to constrain the focus of the passage, as they asked the Prophet for something that does not belong to him, but rather belongs to God Almighty.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ

اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

(11:13) *Or do they say, 'He has fabricated it'? Say, 'Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah, should you be truthful.'*

We have already discussed the possibility of reading 'or' (*am*) being connected to the statement, *Lest you should disregard...*, in the sense of a question. The implication being, 'Are you omitting some of what has been revealed to you out of fear that they will demand a miracle? Or do they say that you have fabricated it and falsely ascribed it to us? For it is unlikely that they would hear my words, then not believe in them.' Some commentators have said that 'or' is detached and not intended a question. This would render the meaning: 'Rather, they say he invented it.'

The Qur'anic Challenge:[1]

Say, 'Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated ...': This is a clear challenge. The pronoun 'it' in 'like it' (*mithli-hi*) refers back to the Qur'an or the chapter insofar as it is part of the Qur'an. The preposition 'then' (*fa*) in 'then bring' (*fa-'tū*) shows that this challenge is in response to their claim, '*He has fabricated it.*' Note that this statement is abridged for the sake of brevity, its full implication being: 'If this Qur'an is what I fabricated and falsely ascribed to God, then it is something I have produced from myself. Therefore, it should be possible for someone else to come up with something like it. If you are truthful in your claims and serious, not jesting, then bring ten chapters like it, invented, and seek help in that with the invocation of all those you can besides God from your idols, which you claim to be gods and to which you rush for all your needs, and others from the rest of the humankind until you have tried all means and methods at your disposal, and there remains no one from whom you can expect aid or assistance in accomplishing this. If this was truly from me, not from God, it would be possible for you to bring something like it then.'

This explanation reveals that the challenge presented by the Qur'an in this verse does not only refer to its arrangement and eloquence, as God

1 We have added this heading because of the nature of the discussion regarding the challenge offered by the Qur'an under the verse 11:13. (Pub.)

tells them to seek assistance from anyone who they could call upon besides God, whether their idols or other creatures, including those who do not know the Arabic language, who are not fluent in its composition, or aware of its eloquence. Therefore, the challenge is general, encompassing all of the Qur'an's contents, including authentic teachings, clear arguments, manifest proofs, virtuous admonitions, noble morals, knowledge of the unseen, as well as fluency and eloquence in Arabic. This is akin to the verse, *Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another'* (17:88). We have already addressed this topic in our discussion on the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'an.

From this, it is clear that the miraculous nature of the Qur'an does not lie solely in its eloquence, clarity, or unique arrangement. Were this not the case, the challenge would not be limited to mere falsification and fabrication, because rhetoric (*balāgha*) has three levels. The highest of these tiers is miraculous and beyond human capabilities, while the middle and lower tiers are within the capacity of ordinary human beings. Therefore, the challenge in the verse only applies to the highest of these levels. However, if the miraculous nature of the Qur'an referred only to eloquence, then even the most inarticulate speech could have been potentially more eloquent and miraculous.

The alikeness mentioned in the verse ('*like it*') also cannot refer to mere genre similarity, as such similarity would imply imitation, which would not constitute an answer to the challenge. Rather, in this, it goes back to the conventions of Arabic literature, as we can see in the poetic duels of Imru' al-Qays and 'Alqama, 'Umar b. Kulthūm and al-Ḥārith b. Halza, and Jarīr and al-Farazdaq.

This discussion illustrates, firstly, that if the miraculous aspect of the Qur'an were its linguistic eloquence alone, something only Arabs would understand, then involving non-Arabs in the challenge would be meaningless. Equally, the verses, *... and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah*, with its generality, and similarly the verse, *Should all humans and jinn rally ...*, would not have had any meaningful purpose. On the contrary, it would have made more sense to say, 'If all Arabs rally ...' or 'Call upon whom you can from your idols and your fellow speakers ...'

Secondly, it shows that if the miraculous aspect of the Qur'an was solely

located in its eloquence, then the argument found in verses such as *Had it been from other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it* (4:82) would be not have made any sense. This verse appears to deny all forms of contradiction, but most contradictions, which relate to ideas, do not harm the linguistic eloquence of expression. This is supported by the verse in this chapter: *Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah* ... If the Qur'an's miraculous aspect were exclusively to be found in its eloquence, these challenges would be beyond the natural sequence.

Thirdly, God issues a challenge with His statement: *Let them bring a discourse like it* (52:34), and His statement in Sūrah Yūnus: *Then bring a chapter like it, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah* (10:38). We have already inferred in our previous discussions that Sūrah Yūnus was revealed before Sūrah Hūd, as supported by traditions. Then, in this chapter, God says: *Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah*. If the miraculous nature of the Qur'an were exclusively due to its eloquence, these challenges would not have followed their appropriate natural sequence, as it would not be right to burden men of eloquence among the Arabs, who deny that the Qur'an is from God, with producing a chapter like it, and then producing ten fabricated chapters like it. It would be more natural to challenge them to produce the entirety of the Qur'an. If they fail in that, then to produce ten chapters like it, fabricated. Then, if they fail again, then to produce a chapter like it.

Some scholars have addressed this issue by explaining that the order of the chapters and the revelation of some of these before others does not necessarily determine the sequence of the verses within these chapters. After all, there are many Meccan verses located within Medinan chapters and vice versa. Therefore, it is conceivable that the challenge verses pertaining to the entirety of the Qur'an were revealed before others. Then, the verse challenging to produce ten fabricated chapters could have been revealed after that, and the verse challenging to produce a single chapter could have been revealed last of all.

This approach would be plausible if we accept that the verses were revealed as described. Otherwise, the issue remains unresolved. The truth is that the Qur'an is miraculous in all of its unique attributes, including its eloquence, clarity, authentic teachings, noble ethics, divine laws, narratives,

parables, knowledge of the unseen, as well as its power over hearts and its beauty that overawes peoples' souls.

As for the challenge to produce ten chapters, given the challenge presented in Sūrah Yūnus to produce just one, al-Ṭabrisī writes in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*:

> 'If one were to ask, "Why is the challenge of the Qur'an sometimes to produce ten chapters, sometimes one chapter, and sometimes with a discourse like it?" The answer is that the challenge pertains to the manifestations of the Qur'an's miraculous nature seen in the arrangement of its speech. Therefore, it is possible to challenge the audience with more or less.'

To this, I would add that, while this explanation is suitable for the principle of challenging its opponents with either one or many, the challenge of producing ten chapters after the challenge of producing one, especially considering the view that its miraculous nature is based solely on eloquence, is not convincing.

Other scholars have sought to explain this by saying that the Qur'an is miraculous in all that it contains, including knowledge, ethics, rulings, stories, and more, characterized by eloquence, rhetoric, and the absence of any discrepancy. The real test occurs when an opponent can bring several chapters similar to the Qur'an, and in those chapters, no difference is seen, especially if those chapters contain stories, demonstrate both eloquence and rhetorical brilliance, and communicate teachings. Only under these circumstances could it be proven that the Qur'an is not a miracle. However, this cannot be established by presenting only one chapter.

This can only be accomplished by presenting equivalents of the longer chapters that encompass all of the aforementioned features, including knowledge, narratives, arguments, and more, like the chapters al-Aʿrāf and al-Anʿām.

The long chapters of the Qur'an that were revealed, encompassing all the aforementioned features before Sūrah Hūd, according to the traditions, are Sūrah al-Aʿrāf, Sūrah Yūnus, Sūrah Maryam, Sūrah Ṭa Ha, Sūrah al-Shuʿarāʾ, Sūrah al-Naml, Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, Sūrah al-Qamar, and Sūrah Ṣād. These nine chapters, together with Sūrah Hūd, make up ten, which aligns with the challenge to produce ten fabricated chapters like them. This is a summarized explanation—the author's original discussion

was more expansive.

Author's comment:

First, one should not rely heavily on traditions to determine the order of the revelation of the Qur'an's chapters. These are, after all, solitary reports that are often of uncertain reliability, and it is not advisable to base exegetical research on such reports.

Second, the apparent meaning of the statement, *Or do they say, 'He has fabricated it'? Say, 'Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated ...'* (11:13), indicates that their accusation of the Prophet fabricating lies about God concerns all the chapters of the Qur'an, both long and short, without specifying one or the other. Therefore, they are obligated to provide a decisive response regarding every Qur'anic chapter, and the challenge is what fulfils this. If they were unable to produce ten long fabricated chapters that encompass the features of the Qur'an, it does not confirm that all of its chapters, even short ones like al-Kawthar and al-'Asr, are from God, unless some additional argument is made, but the text is devoid of any such argument.

Thirdly, regarding the phrase *ten chapters like it*, if the pronoun '*it*' refers to the Qur'an, as appears to be the case in the speaker's statement, this suggests that the challenge to produce ten fabricated chapters like it is without restriction, whether they are long or short. To restrict the challenge to ten long chapters would be to arbitrarily restrict the meaning of the verse without textual evidence, and it would be even more restrictive to claim that the intended comparison is with the ten chapters listed above.

If, on the other hand, the pronoun refers to Sūrah Hūd, this would seem like an odd stipulation. How can it be said to someone who claims that Sūrah al-Kawthar, Sūrah al-Falaq, and Sūrah al-Nās are fabrications against God to produce ten fabricated chapters like Sūrah Hūd and restrict it to that? Unless they argue that this chapter alone is a fabrication against God, in which case the challenge would then be to produce its like. Yet, we have never come across anyone who made such a claim.

Let us now turn to the visible differences between the challenge verses such as, *then bring a chapter like it* (10:38); where the challenge seems to be for them to produce a single chapter, or *then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated* (11:13); where the challenge seems to be for a specific number above one, or *bring a discourse like it* (52:34), where the challenge seems to

be for a dialogue that is similar to the Qur'an, even if it is less than a whole chapter. Each of these verses serves a specific purpose in the Qur'an's challenge to humankind.

To explain further: The various aspects and features of the Qur'an, which constitute its truth as a divine book, in addition to its eloquent language and rhetorical composition, are related to its meanings and intentions. By 'meaning' (*maʿnā*), I do not mean what rhetoricians intend when they say that eloquence is an attribute of meaning (*al-balāgha min ṣifāt al-maʿnā*) and words are merely a medium. By this, they mean the ideas as they are naturally organized in the mind. However, what they refer to as 'meaning' can be found in plain lies, jests, obscenities, satire, and fabrications if they are expressed eloquently, and can be found abundantly in inherited compositions of eloquent poets and prose writers.

Rather, the meaning and purpose of the Qur'an are what God describes it as: A wise book, a clear light, a great Qur'an, a criterion, a guide leading to truth, a straight path, a decisive word, and not a jest; a mighty book that falsehood cannot approach from before it or from behind, a remembrance that judges among people in what they differ about. It is a healing and mercy for the believers and it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss. It is a clarification for everything and none can touch it except the purified.

It is clear that all these are attributes of the meaning of the Qur'an, rather than its text. They are not characteristics of what rhetoricians mean by the 'eloquence', which can also be found in falsehoods in speech that the noble Qur'an refers to as frivolous discourse and sin; it warns against engaging in or uttering them, even if they are examples of eloquent speech. The meaning endowed with these attributes is part of the divine intentions that proceed on the basis of truth, untainted by falsehood, falling within the path of guidance. The discourse that encompasses this meaning, the attribute, and the purpose of this matter, is the one to which divine care is attached, making it a mercy for the believers and a reminder to the worlds.

It is this aspect of the Qur'an with which it is suitable to challenge the disbelievers in the likes of the phrase, *let them bring a discourse like* (52:34). We do not call an utterance a 'discourse' (*ḥadīth*) unless it encompasses a significant purpose which it expresses and conveys from one mind to another. Similarly, in the phrase, *then bring a chapter like it* (10:38), God

does not mention a collection of verses from the Qur'an, however numerous, a 'chapter' (*sūrah*) unless they are united by a divine purpose that distinguishes them from other such collections of verses.

Were this not the case, the challenge could not be accomplished with Qur'anic verses, and the opponent would be able to choose from a large number of individual verses, such as *By the morning brightness*, *By time*, *By the mount*, *In a well-guarded book*, *Dark green*, *The Inevitable, What is the Inevitable, and what will make you realize what the Inevitable is?*, *The Most Merciful*, *The Sovereign of mankind*, *The God of mankind*, *And the moon darkens*, *Nay, and by the moon*, *We shall summon the guards of Hell*, and other individual verses. Then match each of them with corresponding Arabic speech without ensuring a connection between them or including a purpose that unifies and presents them in the form of a single text.

What the opponent is tasked with in these challenges is to produce a discourse resembling the Qur'an, in addition to its eloquent expression, illustrating some of the divine objectives that include purposes characterized by the attributes that God Almighty has mentioned.

The divine discourse, along with the challenge it presents in these verses, differs according to what is manifest of its unique qualities. The entirety of the noble Qur'an is distinguished by being a book containing everything that humanity requires until the Day of Resurrection, including fundamental knowledge, noble ethics, and subsidiary laws. A chapter of the Qur'an is distinguished by the fact that it delivers a comprehensive exposition of a particular purpose among the divine objectives related to the guidance of humankind and the true religion through its exceptional eloquence. This is a level of specificity that is different from that of the entirety of the Qur'an. A set of chapters, like ten or twenty of them, are characterized by another distinctiveness, demonstrating the diversity of intentions, purposes, and the variety therein. Therefore, it is unlikely that such a stunning work of literature came about by chance.

However, if an opponent is incapable of producing a single chapter, it is conceivable that he may think his inability to do so merely indicates humankind's inability to do the same, not that the Qur'an was necessarily revealed by God or revealed through His knowledge. It is possible that this could be like other cases of human genius or excellence, where one individual might excel in a certain aspect, such as being the tallest, largest,

bravest, most generous, most cowardly, or most miserly. Therefore, according to this opponent, the Qur'an is still the product of a human being, albeit one who is unmatched in genius.

Now, this possibility is refuted for even a single chapter of the Qur'an, which is what the opponent intended to challenge (for it is a profoundly eloquent discourse, containing truthful meanings and endowed with noble attributes that is utterly free from the substance of lies). Such a feature does not occur by mere coincidence or happenstance without it being intended in itself, serving a purpose related to the Divine Will. However, the likelihood of coincidence or happenstance is even more remote when there are multiple chapters with these features. The production one chapter after another, the exposition of one purpose after another, and the revelation of one secret after another, leaves no room for the possibility of coincidence or happenstance, as should be obvious.

Having clarified the above, it becomes evident that this challenge could also be presented in the form of the verse, *Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another'* (17:88). In fact, the verse just quoted serves as an introduction to the challenge with the entirety of the Qur'an due to the divine objectives it encompasses and because it is unique in that it contains everything that humankind will need until the Day of Resurrection. The verse, *Say, 'Then bring a chapter like it …'* (10:38), explicitly challenges the audience to produce a single chapter because each individual chapter of the Qur'an thoroughly expounds a specific divine purpose that fits into God's plan for the guidance of humankind without frivolity. Then, the present verse, *Say, 'Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated…'* challenges them with the production of ten chapters of the Qur'an, because these both embody a mastery of exposition and a diversity of purpose. Indeed, the number 'ten' serves to signify abundance rather than the literal number ten (like 'a hundred' or 'a thousand'), as per the verse: *Each of them is eager to live a thousand years …* (2:96). Therefore, what is meant by *ten chapters* here is 'a number of chapters', signifying any quantity that would be recognized as a multitude by the people. It is, as if to say, 'bring forth a multitude of chapters equivalent to these, a dozen of them.' This is to make clear that the variety of objectives found in the Qur'an's exposition and miraculous discourse can have only come from God.

As for the verse, *Let them bring a discourse like it* (52:34), this appears to be a challenge that encompasses all of the three aforementioned challenges, as the term discourse can refer to the entirety of the Qur'an, a single chapter of it, or ten chapters of it equally. Therefore, this is a challenge to produce anything at all that exhibits the same unique qualities as the Qur'an, as is obvious.

There remain two matters to address. First, none of the verses challenging adversaries to produce something similar to the Qur'an describe the work of adversaries as 'fabrications', except for the present one, where it says: *Then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated*, unlike when it says, *Then bring a chapter like it …*, where it doesn't add the adjective 'fabricated', as is the case with the remainder of the challenge verses.

The reason behind this, possibly, is that the nature of the concern in the verse under discussion is different from that of the rest of the challenge verses. The emphasis in the rest of the verses is that they are incapable of producing anything like the Qur'an or even a chapter like it, because the Qur'an possesses qualities that are beyond human capabilities to imitate and are only found in something of divine origin. By contrast, the present challenge concludes with the phrase, *know that it has been sent down with Allah's knowledge*. This suggests that the challenge here is to create a Qur'an which contains special divine knowledge, which is beyond the reach of any ordinary person. This is a task that inherently rejects fabrication. It is as though the verse is saying: 'This Qur'an cannot be fabricated as it contains aspects of divine knowledge inaccessible to anyone but God. If you have doubts about this, produce ten fabricated chapters similar to it and seek assistance from anyone you can besides God. If you are unable to do so, know that the unique knowledge found here is exclusive to God.' So ponder on this.

The second matter is the meaning of the challenge 'to produce the like of' something (rather than, say, something 'better' than it), where it says *the like of this Qur'an*, *a discourse like it*, *a chapter like it*, or *ten chapters like it*. The apparent reason for this is that, because the discourse is a miraculous sign, if a human could produce something equivalent to it, that would suffice to disprove its miraculous nature, without the need to produce something that excels it in qualities or surpasses it in its unique features.

Now, one might argue that the inability of others apart from the

Prophet to replicate the Qur'an does not necessarily demonstrate its miraculous nature or conclusively establish its divine origin. Indeed, attributes of excellence present in humans, such as eloquence, writing, bravery, generosity, and so on, exist at different varying levels, some surpassing others. If so, among these levels, there is one that surpasses all others, and it is the utmost level the human mind can aspire to.

For every excellence, there always exists among those possessing it an individual who holds the highest degree of it, unmatched and unchallenged by anyone else. Therefore, among all humans, there will necessarily be someone who is the most eloquent, the most literate, the bravest, the most generous, the tallest, or the largest, for instance. Why then can the Prophet not simply have been the most articulate and eloquent of all people, and his Qur'anic revelation, which no one can counter due to its unmatched nature, be merely his own words? If so, the inability of others to replicate it does not necessarily prove that it is a divine text, as it could still be a unique human text that only he had the ability to produce and elusive to others.

This argument can be countered by stating that human attributes in which differences occur, while existing as mentioned, are natural qualities. These are granted by God's instillation of potentiality within human nature, emerging spontaneously and not predicated on coincidence or cause. An individual possessing a characteristic can attribute it to themselves without cause. Given this, if a human individual excels in a particular virtue and is unmatched and unsurpassed by any other, others still have the option to follow their path and, through practice, training, and discipline, perform acts that mirror the excellence this person appears to exclusively possess, emulating some of their deeds even if they cannot compete with them entirely or equal them in every aspect. Thus, the distinguished individual will retain a unique position of originality and precedence, but others will still clearly be able to come close to them.

Take, for instance, the pre-Islamic figure of Ḥātim, who was known for his generosity. Even though he was unrivalled and unmatched in his generosity, it was still possible for others to follow in his footsteps, practicing and training themselves to manifest some level of his generosity, even if they could not rival him entirely or practice it at his legendary level. This is the case for all human virtues and the principle that governs all human

actions. Through practice and training, humans can follow the path of pioneers in these virtues and perform some of their deeds, even if they cannot match their original standing entirely.

However, if we were to assume that the Qur'an is the Prophet's speech, rather than that of God, and that he is potentially the most eloquent and rhetorically gifted human to have ever lived, it would be plausible that others could take interest, train, and attempt to imitate the sublime patterns he originated in his speech. They might be able to imitate something of the text, to produce a chapter like it, even if they couldn't replicate the entirety of the Qur'an. After all, the challenge issued in the aforementioned verses does not require that they to come up with a more eloquent or superior discourse, or a more eloquent or superior chapter, to the point where the Qur'an is regarded as the most eloquent or the best human speech and there is nothing more eloquent or superior to it. In which case, their inability to produce such doesn't indicate that it is not of human origin. Rather, what was actually said was: *Let them bring a discourse like it*, *Say, 'Then bring a chapter like it …'*, and so forth. Humans are, after all, capable of replicating human speech, even if we suppose that no one else can rival it. As we have already explained, the doubt is dispelled by God's use of the phrase 'like it' (*mithli-hi*), as if the Qur'an was human speech, they should have been able to at least imitate it.

Commentary continues:

فَإِلَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ
فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

(11:14) ***But if they do not respond to you, know that it has been sent down with Allah's knowledge, and that there is no god except Him. Will you, then, submit?***

From the context, it appears that the verse is addressing the idolaters, and that it is part of the Prophet's speech included within the command '*Say* …' in the previous verse, which God bid him to convey to them. Therefore, the plural pronoun '*they*' in *If they do not respond* … refers back to the idols and everyone they sought help from besides God, indicated by His words: *and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah*.

The implication is: 'If those helpers whom you called upon—your deities, your men of eloquence who are well-versed in the artful use of language, the scholars of the People of the Book who are in possession of divine scriptures containing the tales of prophets and nations, soothsayers who are inspired by the whisperings of demons, learned persons, and other people immersed in human knowledge—do not respond to your call, O idolaters, then know that this Qur'an has been revealed with God's knowledge. It was not something I produced from my knowledge or the knowledge of anyone else whom you allege to have taught it me!

And know that what I invite you to—monotheism—is the truth. For if there were any deity other than God, they would have supported you in what you invited them to. So, are you polytheists willing to submit to God, obedient to His command?'

Therefore, God's statement, *But if they do not respond to you* ..., means as we might say, 'if you still cannot meet this challenge after seeking help and support from whomever you could invoke other than God ...' This is because the reasons that necessitate their capability to meet this challenge are their eloquent language and rhetorical skill. They believe that these qualities are gifts from their deities besides God, and also gifts that their deities have not yet bestowed upon them. Now, according to this belief of theirs, these deities could have supported them with such gifts if they so chose. Also, they could draw assistance from others besides these deities of theirs. However, if those they call upon do not come to their aid in meeting the Qur'an's challenge, then this shows that the means they have at their disposal are exhausted and, consequently, their capability to meet its challenge is shown to be null. Therefore, the lack of response from their associates in opposing the Qur'an demonstrates their own incapacity to do so, even when aided by their own intrinsic abilities. This is what the current passage hints at.

When God says, *know that it has been sent down with Allah's knowledge*, this refers to God's unique knowledge, the Unseen (*al-ghayb*), which is inaccessible to anyone other than Him, except with His permission. As He has stated elsewhere in the Qur'an, *But Allah bears witness to what He has sent down to you—He sent it down with His knowledge* (4:166); *These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you* (12:102); *Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except to a messenger He*

approves of (72:26–27); and *This is indeed a noble Qur'an, in a guarded Book, no one touches it except the pure ones, gradually sent down from the Lord of all the worlds* (56:77–80).

Thus, the meaning is: 'If you are unable to oppose it through any of the means from which you have sought help besides God, be certain that it was revealed only due to an unseen cause and that it contains knowledge of the Unseen that is known only to God. He is the one who revealed it to me, spoke to me with it, and intended to make me and you understand the true knowledge and treasures of guidance that it contains.'

Some have said that what is intended here is that the Qur'an was only revealed with God's knowledge of its revelation and this is His attestation to it being a genuine revelation from Him. Others have suggested that it means the Qur'an was only revealed with God's knowledge that it cannot be opposed or with His knowledge of its structure and order, which no one else knows. However, these interpretations are weak and far from a proper understanding of the text.

The phrase, *know that it has been sent down with Allah's knowledge* is but the first of two conclusions that are drawn from the failure of the idolater's confederates to respond to them. The second conclusion is found within the statement, *and that there is no god except Him*. Both of these conclusions are necessarily arrived at in two ways:

The first is that when the idolaters call upon their deities for matters of concern to them, and these deities do not respond, it reveals that these deities are not truly gods. The true Deity is the one who responds to the distressed when He is called upon, especially when the request is to the benefit of the deity being invoked. The Qur'an brought by the Prophet was destined to defeat these deities, erase all memory of them from humankind, and turn people away from them. So, if the idolater's patrons do not respond when they are called upon to oppose such a book, it is the clearest evidence for the negation of their divinity.

The second way is that if it is established that the Qur'an is the truth that has been revealed by God and it is veracious in its accounts and it asserts that there is no other deity other than God, then we have no choice but to affirm that there is no god but Him.

His question, *Will you, then, submit?*, implies that given all that you have come to know, that your patrons other than God have not responded

to you, and that you are fundamentally unable to respond to the Qur'an's challenge, will you then submit to this knowledge, which affirms the oneness of God and the fact that the Qur'an has been revealed with His knowledge? In reality, this command to submit is framed as a question, which is suggested by the apparent meaning of the verse.

It has also been suggested that the verse, *But if they do not respond to you* ..., is actually God speaking to the Prophet in the plural form to honor him (that is, 'you' plural) and elevate his status. Then, the third person plural pronoun ('they') refers back to the idolaters, meaning: 'If the idolaters do not respond to the challenge you, O Prophet, have delivered to them, then know that the Qur'an is revealed with the knowledge of God, and that God is One. So, will you submit to His command?'

However, the problem with this reading is that, in classical Arabic, only the first-person plural ('we') conveys a higher status, and this is specifically for the speaker. The same is not true for the second or third person plurals, 'you' (pl.) and 'they.'

This is in addition to the fact that when God speaks to the Prophet or sends him revelations, there is no question that this comes from Him, such that he would require some evidence for it. The Prophet receives this in a way that he inherently knows it is a speech from God; inherent in the sense that it requires no further proof of its divine origin. Therefore, it is not necessary for God to call the Prophet's attention to the failure of the idolaters to meet the challenge of the Qur'an or their inability to do so in order to prove to him that it is indeed His speech. This is unlike the speech of other creatures such as humans, jinn, angels, or any other speaker, which would require some external evidence, through either sensory perception or reason, to confirm that it did indeed come from the speaker. This concept was hinted at in the story of Zechariah in Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, and we will discuss this more fully later on.

Not to mention that addressing the Prophet with words such as *and that there is no god except Him. Will you, then, submit?* does not make sense, and the reasoning behind such a reading is also incomplete, as we will show.

Other commentators have suggested that the verse is addressed to both the Prophet and to the totality of the believers or solely to believers because they share with him the role of calling others to the religion and challenging them with the Qur'an, which is the scripture of their Lord revealed

to them through the Prophet. According to this reading, the meaning of the verse is thus: 'if the idolaters do not respond to your challenge, then know that the Qur'an is revealed with the knowledge of God, and there is no god but Him. So, will you all then submit to God?'

However, when some other commentators saw that there is no point in inviting believers—who are already firm in their belief in God alone and His book—to acknowledge that it is a book revealed by God, and that He is One without partner, they proposed a revision to this reading, namely: 'Be steadfast in your knowledge that it is indeed revealed with the knowledge of God, thereby strengthening your faith and certainty that there is no deity deserving of worship but Him. Will you then remain steadfast in your submission and dedication to Him?'

However, this reading arbitrarily restricts the scope of the verse's meaning while presenting an incomplete argument. If the idolaters had responded to the Qur'an's challenge with all the resources at their disposal, invoking their deities and all those they hoped could help them among jinn and humans, and then failed to meet this challenge, this would have been a clear indication that the Qur'an was indeed beyond human speech, thereby completing the argument against them. However, the non-response of the unbelievers to the challenge does not prove that it is from God, because they did not attempt what they were challenged to do, namely, *then bring ten chapters like it, fabricated*. This is either because they knew it was the truth from God (and their accusation of it being forged stemmed from stubbornness and obstinacy, not conviction in this claim or doubt about the Qur'an) or because they despaired of their partners ever responding to the challenge, or because they were frivolous in their speech, speaking nonsense rather than engaging seriously with the Prophet's arguments.

In sum, the lack of any response from the idolaters to the Prophet or to the believers, or to both, does not, by itself, indicate that the Qur'an was revealed by God, unless their lack of response occurred after they had called on their associates and patrons to assist them and these associates and patrons did not respond. However, there is no evidence in the verse that the idolaters ever made such a call, so their lack of response alone is not sufficient to show this. The only remaining interpretation would be that the verse means: 'If the idolaters called upon all those whom they could besides God, and they did not respond, and if the idolaters did not respond

to you, O Prophet and believers, then know that the Qur'an is only revealed with the knowledge of God …', and this confirms our aforementioned criticism that such a reading arbitrarily restricts the meaning of the verse.

This is in addition to the fact that such a reading would mean that the verse implicitly demanded that the believers fortify their faith and certainty based on the non-occurrence of an event—an illogical demand that is beneath the dignity of God's speech. Had the verse meant to imply that the idolaters are incapable of meeting the Qur'an's challenge even if they call upon all of their associates, it would have been more appropriate to say, '*But if they do not respond to you*, and they will not respond, *know …*', similar to the verse where God says, *And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a sūrah like it, and invoke your helpers besides Allah, should you be truthful. And if you do not—and you will not—then beware the Fire whose fuel will be humans and stones, prepared for the faithless.* (2:23-24).

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا
لَا يُبْخَسُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ ۖ وَحَبِطَ مَا
صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

(11:15-16) ***As for those who desire the life of this world and its glitter, We will recompense them fully for their works therein, and they shall not be underpaid in it. They are the ones for whom there shall be nothing in the Hereafter but Fire: what they had accomplished in the world has failed, and their works have come to naught.***

'Recompense' (*tawfiya*) means to deliver a person what they are due in full, without stinting anything from it, while 'underpaid' (*bakhsh*) means to pay someone less than the full amount due to them.

The verse contains a threat for those who do not surrender to the truth when it comes to them and refuse to submit to it, preferring the life of this world and forgetting about the Hereafter. It also elucidates some of the laws of causality that make them despair of the blessings of the Hereafter.

This is because any action, no matter what it is, only permits a person to attain the goal for which it was intended. If the goal is worldly, and the

action serves the affairs of this life in terms of wealth, beauty, or comfort, then this action—if all other contributing factors are favorable—leads to the outcome that was desired. As for the objectives of the Hereafter, there is nothing to say about them because they were not an outcome intended by the doer of the action, so they do not occur. The mere fact that an action is *appropriate* for the path of the Hereafter and beneficial for achieving its rewards, such as righteousness, good conduct, and good character, does not necessitate reward and elevation in ranks unless it was *intended* for the sake of pleasing God and obtaining His reward.

This is why God follows up by saying: *They are the ones for whom there shall be nothing in the Hereafter but Fire: what they had accomplished in the world has failed, and their works have come to naught* (11:16). This reveals that when they are faced with the life of the Hereafter, they will enter the abode of the reality of their deeds, which is a fire that consumes all of their worldly deeds just as fire consumes firewood, obliterates, and destroys everything that gratifies their souls in the pleasures of existence. It nullifies the effects in the hereafter of all that they have done and invalidates all of their worldly accomplishments. That is why, in another context, God called it the House of Ruin (*Dār al-Bawār*)—meaning the House of Destruction: "*Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessing with ingratitude, and landed their people in the house of ruin? Hell, which they shall enter, and it is an evil abode!* (14:28–29). This illustrates the reality both phrases *what they had accomplished in the world has failed* and *their works have come to naught* are intended to explain: *They are the ones for whom there shall be nothing in the Hereafter but Fire*. There is nothing for them but the Fire, because everything else has been invalidated.

From the above, it is clear that the meaning of recompensing them for their deeds in full means to actualize their results and convey the effects according to the system of cause and effect that governs the material and spiritual realms, not merely to deliver what the doer seeks by his action or hopes to attain by undertaking it. What the doer obtains in this life by his actions are the outcomes of these actions, which are determined by all the contributing factors, not merely what the doer conceives, no matter what it is, as not everything one desires is achievable.

God expressed this reality elsewhere, when He says, *Whoever desires the tillage of the Hereafter, We will enhance for him his tillage, and whoever*

desires the tillage of the world, We will give some of it to him, but he will have no share in the Hereafter (42:20). Notice that He says, *We will give some of it to him* rather than 'We will give it to him.' In another verse, He says, *Whoever desires this transitory life, We expedite for him therein whatever We wish, for whomever We desire. Then We appoint hell for him, to enter it, blameful and spurned* (17:18). In these verses, God says that the human being will obtain some of what He wishes for in this world but further clarifies that not everyone who desires a thing will necessarily attain it. On the contrary, the matter is up to God, who gives whatever He wills, withholds whatever He wills, and brings forward or holds back whomever He wills according to the system of cause and effect that He has instituted in the universe.

Secondly, the two verses, by which I mean His saying: *As for those who desire the life of this world and its glitter, We will recompense them fully for their works therein*... expound one of the divine realities.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, regarding the verse, *Look! They fold up their breasts* ... (11:5), it is related from Ibn Maḥbūb, from Jāmīl b. Ṣāliḥ, from Sudayr, from Abū Jaʿfar, who said, 'Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh informed me that the idolaters, when they passed by the Messenger of God near the Kaʿba, one of them would lower his head and back in this manner, and cover his head with his robe so that the Prophet of God would not see him. Then God revealed, *Look! They fold up their breasts* ...'

(2) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abū Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh, who narrate from Abū Rizīn who said: 'One of them would bend his back and cover himself with his garment.'

(3) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī reports from ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn and Abū Jaʿfar and Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad: 'the verb "fold up" (*yathnūnī*) is on the conjugation pattern of *yafʿūʿal*.'

(4) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl, from Jābir, from Abū Jaʿfar who said: 'A man from the Bedouins came to the Messenger of God and said: "O Messenger of God, I have sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and

granddaughters, and the livelihood is light upon us. If you see fit, O Messenger of God, to ask God to increase it for us."
Whereat the man began to weep, and the Muslims felt pity for him. The Prophet of God then said, "*There is no animal on the earth, but that its sustenance lies with Allah, and He knows its abode and its temporary place of lodging. Everything is in a manifest Book*. He who is responsible for putting food in these mouths, whose sustenance is guaranteed by God, God will pour sustenance upon him abundantly—like pouring water, if little then little, and if much then much."' The narrator added: 'Then the Prophet of God prayed and the Muslims said "amen."'
The narrator said, Abū Jaʿfar said: 'I was then informed by someone who saw the man in the time of ʿUmar, and he asked him about his situation, and he said: "Who is better than he who God made his income lawful and increased his wealth."'

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī reported in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl*, and al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī authenticated it, and Ibn Mardawayh and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿub al-Īmān*, all narrate from Ibn Masʿūd, from the Prophet, who said: 'When the appointed term of one of you is in a particular land, a need for it is made available to him, until when he reaches his furthest step, he is seized by death, so the earth will say on the Day of Resurrection: 'This is what was temporary lodged with me."'

Author's comment: The narration does not accord with the apparent meaning of the verse.

(6) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī transmits via his chain of narrators from Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, from Abū Jaʿfar, who said: 'The Messenger of God said during the Farewell Pilgrimage: "Behold, the Trustworthy Spirit has imparted to my mind that no soul will die until it completes its sustenance, so fear God and behave beautifully in its pursuit, and do not let delay of some of the sustenance lead you to seek it by way of disobedience to God, for indeed God the Exalted has divided sustenance among His creation lawfully and has not divided them unlawfully. So, whoever fears God and is patient, his sustenance will come to him lawfully, and whoever tears the veil that God Almighty has drawn across it and seizes it

unlawfully, his lawful sustenance will be reduced, and he will be held accountable for it.'"

Author's comment: This tradition is well-known, narrated by both Sunnī and Shīʿī scholars via numerous chains of narration.

(7) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Abū al-Hadhīl, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, who said: "Indeed God has divided all sustenance among His servants and has prepared a great grace that He has not divided among anyone. God has said: *And ask Allah for His grace* (4:32)."

Author's comment: This tradition is also narrated from the Prophet and some reports in a similar vein has have already been presented in relation to His saying, *and You provide for whomever You wish without any reckoning* (3:27), and His saying, *And ask Allah for His grace* (4:32).

(8) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, who said: 'The Commander of the Faithful used to often say: "Know for certain that God Almighty has not made it possible for the servant—no matter how hard he strives, no matter how well he plans, and no matter how abundant his schemes—to obtain what was assigned to him in the Wise Remembrance before its time. O people! A person will not increase in wealth by so much as a date thread through his cleverness, nor will a person decrease in wealth by so much as a date thread due to his stupidity. So, the one who realizes this and works according to it is the most relaxed of people in pursuing his own benefit, and the one who knows this but abandons it is the most dedicated of people in pursuing his own harm, and perhaps one who is blessed with kindness is gradually lured by kindness to Him and perhaps one who is conceited among the people is led into perdition. So fear God, O you who strive, in your striving, and hold back from your haste, and wake up from your habitual heedlessness, and reflect on what has come from God Almighty upon the tongue of His Prophet."'

(9) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī relates via his chain of narrators from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥajjāj, from Abī ʿAbd Allāh, who said: 'Indeed, Muḥammad b. al-Munkadir used to say: "I did not think that ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn would leave behind a person better than him until I saw his son Muḥammad b. ʿAlī. I wanted

to advise him, but he advised me." His companions asked him: "With what did he advise you?" He said: "I went out to some parts of Medina in a hot hour. I met Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī who was a bulky man, and he was leaning on two servant boys. I said to myself: 'Glory be to God, one of the elders of the Quraysh is out at this hour, in such a state, in pursuit of this world! I will certainly advise him.'

I approached him and greeted him. He responded to me with difficulty while sweating heavily. I said: 'May God rectify you, an elder of Quraysh out at this hour, in such a state, in pursuit of this world! What if your time came while you were in this state?' He said: 'If death came to me while I am in this state, it would have come to me while I am engaged in an act of obedience to God Almighty. It is through "this state" that I provide for myself and my dependents so that we do not need to rely on you or on other people, and I only fear that death would come to me while I am in a state of disobedience to God.' So, I said: 'You have spoken the truth, may God have mercy on you: I wanted to advise you, but it was you who advised me!'

(10) al-Kulaynī transmits via his chain of narrators, from ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, a freed slave of Āl Sām who said: 'I met Abū ʿAbd Allāh in some roads of Medina on a hot summer's day. I said: "May I be your ransom, even with your status with God Almighty and your closeness to the Messenger of God, you are exerting yourself on such a day?" He said: "O ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, I went out in pursuit of sustenance, to be independent of seeking it from someone like you."' (ibid.)

Author's comment: And there is no contradiction between the divine decree of apportioning sustenance to the creatures and the divine command to the creatures to seek it, as should be obvious.

(11) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Ṭayālisī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Tirmidhī (who deemed it a good narration), Ibn Māja, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Abū al-Shaykh in *al-ʿAẓama*, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmāʾ wa al-Ṣifāt* all narrate from Abū Razīn who said: 'I said: "O Messenger of God, where was our Lord before He created His creation?" He said: 'He was in a cloud (*ʿamāʾ*), all that was below Him was air (*mā taḥta-hu hawāʾ*) and

all that was above Him was air, and He created His throne over the water.'"

Author's comment: *'Amā'* is a cloud that obscures one's vision. When he says 'all that was below Him was air and all that was above Him was air', *mā'* is a relative pronoun (*mawṣūla*). The meaning of *hawā'* is a void that is completely empty. This is the same as the meaning we observe in the verse, *their hearts will be vacant* (af'idatu-hum hawā') (14:43). Alternatively, we could read the *mā'* as a negation (*nāfiya*) and *hawā'* as denoting the common meaning of 'air.' In this case, the tradition would mean that God was in a cloud that was not encompassed by air, unlike all other clouds.

The narration is one of the traditions that, taken literally, seem to assign anthropomorphic qualities to God (*tajassum*), which is why when the Prophet says, 'He was in a cloud', this is to be understood as a metaphor for the unknowability of the Divine Essence, which confounds human intellects and baffles perceptions.

(12) Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Bukhārī, Tirmidhī, Nasa'ī, Abū al-Shaykh in his book "*al-'Aẓama*, Ibn Mardawayh, and Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt* all narrate from 'Imrān b. Ḥuṣayn, who said: 'The people of Yemen asked: "O Messenger of God, tell us about the beginning of creation—how was it?" He replied: "God existed before everything, His throne was upon the water, He wrote the mention of everything in the Preserved Tablet, and created the heavens and the earth." Then, a caller called out: "Your camel has gone astray, O son of Ḥuṣayn!" so he went away, and behold, it was a mirage that had deceived him. He said: "By God, I wish I had left it to roam." (*al-Durr al-Manthūr*)

Author's comment: Several scholars of traditions narrated this report from Burayda, and Burayda said at the end of it: 'Then a man came to me and said: "Your camel has gone astray." So I went out and it was a mirage that was deceiving him. I wish I had left it to roam."' This is a factor that weakens the two traditions.

(13) Concerning the verse, *that He may test you: which of you is best in conduct* (11:7), it is related from Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar in his book *al-'Aql*, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ḥākim in *al-Tārīkh*, and Ibn Mardawayh, from Ibn 'Umar who said: 'The Messenger of God recited this verse: *that He may test you: which of you is*

best in conduct, so I asked: "What does this mean, O Messenger of God?" He said: "It means to test which of you has the best intellect (*ʿaql*)." Then he said: "And the best of you in intellect is the most cautious of you concerning God's prohibitions, and the most knowledgeable of you (or the most devoted of you) in obeying God"' (ibid.)

(14) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh concerning the verse, *that He may test you: which of you is best in conduct*, he said: 'This does not mean the one of you who performs the most actions, but the one who is most correct in his actions. Correctness is achieved through the fear of God and sincere intention.'

Then he said: 'To persist in an action until it is purified is harder than the action itself, and the pure action is the one for which you do not wish to be praised by anyone except God Almighty. The intention is better than the action. Indeed, the intention is the action!' Then he recited the verse, *Say, 'Everyone acts according to his character ...'* (17:84), meaning according to his intention.

Author's comment: His statement, 'Indeed, the intention is the action', means that an action has no effect unless it is accompanied by the correct intention.

(15) In the *Tafsīr* of al-Nuʿmānī, it is transmitted via his chain of narration from Isḥāq b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, regarding the verse, *if We defer their punishment until a certain time* (umma maʿdūda) ... (11:8), he said: 'The punishment is the emergence of the *Qāʾim*, and the *umma maʿdūda* are the people of Badr and his Companions (where *umma maʿdūda* is understood in the sense of 'numbered nation' rather than 'appointed time').

Author's comment: The same meaning is narrated by al-Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī*, and al-Qummī and al-ʿAyyāshī in their respective commentaries from ʿAlī, al-Bāqir, and al-Ṣādiq.

(16) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, we read: 'Some have said: "The numbered nation (*umma maʿdūda*) are the companions of the Mahdī—three hundred and a few more men, like the count of the people of Badr—they will gather together in an hour, as the autumn locusts gather."' Al-Ṭabrisī says: 'And this is what is narrated from Abū

Jaʿfar and Abū ʿAbd Allāh,.'

(17) In the *Tafsīr* of al-Qummī, regarding the verse, *excepting those who are patient and do righteous deeds* (11:11), we read: 'He said: "They are patient in adversity and continue to do good deeds in times of ease."'

(18) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding His saying, *As for those who desire the life of this world ...* (11:15), al-Suyūṭī narrates from al-Bayhaqī, who narrated in *Shuʿub al-Īmān* from Anas, who said: 'The Messenger of God, said: "When the Day of Resurrection comes, my community will be divided into three groups: a group who worshipped God purely, a group who worshipped God for show, and a group who worshipped God to achieve worldly gain. He will say to the one who worshipped God for the world: 'By My Majesty and Glory, what did you want with My worship?' He will say: 'The world.' He will say: 'Surely what you have gathered will not benefit you and you will not ever return to it—take him to the Fire!' And He will say to the one who worshipped God for show: 'By My Majesty and Glory, what did you want with My worship?' He said: 'To impress others.' He will say: 'Your worship with which you were showing off: nothing of it has ascended to Me and nothing of it will benefit you today—take him to the Fire!' And He will say to the one who worshipped God purely: 'By My Majesty and Glory, what did you want with My worship?' He will say: 'By Your Majesty and Glory, for You know this better than I. I worshipped You for Your sake and for Your abode!' He will say: 'My servant has spoken the truth—take him to Paradise!'

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Verses 17–24

Based on their apparent meaning, these verses are intended to comfort the Prophet, strengthen his faith in the Book of God, and affirming his insight into his mission. This continues from the previous section of verses, in which God was speaking directly to His Messenger until it reached the point where God recounted the idolaters accusing him of fabricating lies about God Almighty. Then, God bade His Prophet to challenge them to produce ten chapters like these alleged fabrications. He was also told to console himself and stay firm in his knowledge that the Qur'an was indeed revealed by God, that he is upon nothing other than the truth, and that he is not a fabricator. Therefore, he should not be disturbed by the majority's rejection and should not doubt.

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ
إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ
مَوْعِدُهُ ۚ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

(11:17) *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows? And before him there was the Book of Moses, a guide and mercy. It is they who have faith in it, and whoever denies it from among the factions, the Fire is their tryst. So do not be in doubt about it; it is the truth from your Lord, but most people do not have faith.*

This verse follows on from the previous section, which contained an argument for the Qur'an being a scripture revealed by God Almighty. Note that the question, *Is he who stands... follows?* appears to be incomplete, as its predicate is implicit, its meaning being '...like everyone else?' or something similar. The evidence for this is the subsequent sentence, *It is they who have faith in it, and whoever denies it from among the factions, the Fire is their tryst*.

This is also a rhetorical question with the force of a negation. In other words: 'One who has these qualities is not like others who do not have them; you have these qualities, so do not be in any doubt about the Qur'an.'

When He says, *on a manifest proof* (bayyina) *from his Lord*, the word *bayyina* is an adjective meaning 'clear and apparent.' However, clear and apparent matters may also make clear and apparent what is attached to or associated with them. For example, light, which is manifest and apparent in of itself, also makes other things apparent. Hence, the term *bayyina* is often used for things that make other things clear, like an argument or a sign, and witness testimony in support of the claim of a legal claimant is also called a *bayyina*.

God has used *bayyina* to refer to a conclusive argument in His saying, *so that he who perishes might perish by a manifest proof* (8:42). He has also used it to refer to His signs, as per the verse, *There has certainly come to you a manifest proof from your Lord. This she-camel of Allah is a sign for you* (7:73). He has also called the divine insight given to the prophets a *bayyina*, as in His saying in the story of Noah: *O my people! Tell me, should I stand on a manifest proof from my Lord, and He has granted me His own mercy* ... (11:28). The term *bayyina* can also refer to divine insight in general, as is apparent from the verse, *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from its Lord like someone to whom the evil of his conduct is made to seem decorous, and who follow their desires?* (47:14). And, in the same vein as the present verse, God has said: *Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people, like one who dwells in a manifold darkness which he cannot leave?* (6:122).

The use of *bayyina* in the context of the present verse most strongly suggests the last general meaning of the term given above, as indicated by the subsequent phrase, *It is they who have faith in it*. Even so, the specific addressee of this is evidently the Prophet, as the conclusion God draws from this rhetorical question is, *So do not be in doubt about it* ..., in which the imperative '*do not be*' is the second-person singular ('you'), rather than the plural.

Therefore, the *manifest proof* mentioned in this verse refers to the divine insight bestowed upon the Prophet, rather than the Qur'anic revelation that has been sent down to him. After all, it doesn't seem fitting, on the face of it, for God to say, *So do not be in doubt about it* about the Qur'an

itself, which is evidently clear. However, this reading in no way contradicts the Qur'an being itself a clear sign from God as a revelation, as indicated in His saying, *Indeed I stand on a manifest proof from my Lord and you have denied it* (6:57), as each of the two verses has its own specific context.

On the basis of what we have discussed, it is clear that the claim of those who say that the construction '*he who* ...' specifically refers to the Prophet is not correct. Rather, it is a general statement that applies to the Prophet in this context. Similarly, the claim that the phrase, '*it is they who have faith in it*', refers to the Companions has no basis for restricting the meaning of the verse thusly.

Furthermore, the claim that *manifest proof* here refers to the Qur'an is also evidently incorrect, as is the claim that it refers to rational argumentation (*ḥujjat al-ʿaql*), which is attributed to God here because He is the one who establishes the validity of both logical and transmitted evidence. The reason for its incorrectness is that there is no evidence for such a particularization of the verse's meaning, nor can the *manifest proof from his Lord*, upon which the Prophet stands, be equated with the theological arguments given to us by way of rational thought.

As for His saying, *and whom a witness* (shāhid) *of his own follows* (yatlū-hu), the intended meaning of 'witnessing' here is the act of providing testimony to confirm the truth of the matter that was witnessed, rather than observing something in order to testify about it later. This is because this witnessing is mentioned in the context of affirming the truth of the Qur'an. Therefore, it is more fitting for 'witnessing' to mean the act of testifying rather than the act of observing to testify later.

It would also appear that the *witness* mentioned here is someone who is absolutely certain of the truth of the Qur'an. This is someone who has also been granted divine insight into it, who believes in it on the basis of this insight and, therefore, testifies that it is the truth revealed by God Almighty, with the same level of certainty as he testifies to the truths of monotheism and prophethood. This is because the testimony of a person with insight and certainty can remove another person's doubts and misgivings and strengthen their certainty. This is because when a person is convinced of something but finds that he alone is convinced of it, the fact that no one else agrees with him might cause him to entertain misgivings about his own convictions. On the other hand, when someone else affirm

the same idea and support him in it, this removes his worries, strengthens his heart, and invigorates his spirit. Indeed, God Himself has argued on a similar basis in the verse, *Say, 'Tell me, if it is from Allah and you disbelieve in it, and a witness from the Children of Israel has testified to its like and believed, while you are disdainful?'*

According to this reading, the verb *yatlū-hu* should also mean 'to follow' rather than 'to recite.' The pronoun *-hu* refers back either to '*he who* ...' or '*a manifest proof*.' The latter meaning makes sense insofar as this *manifest proof* is a guide or a light. However, the meaning of both readings is the same, for the witness who follows *he who stands on a manifest proof from its Lord* is the same as the one who follows the *manifest proof*, as they are both ultimately following the same *manifest proof*. Equally, the pronoun '*his*' in the phrase *a witness of his own* refers back to *he who stands on a manifest proof from its Lord* rather than to *his Lord*, and it obviously does not refer back to *a manifest proof*. Therefore, the meaning of this section of the verse is: 'Whoever is in possession of divine insight into this matter and is joined by one of his own who testifies to its veracity and to his uprightness...'

In this way, what is reported in the *ḥadīth* books of both Shīʿa and Sunnī sects makes sense: The '*witness*' mentioned here is ʿAlī, in the sense that the general principle expounded in this part of the verse applies to him in this instance, not in the sense that he is meant exclusively by the wording of the verse.

Commentators have offered various explanations of the sentence. For example, some have said that the verb *yatlū-hu* means 'he recites it' or that the pronoun *-hu* refers to the *manifest proof* or to *he who*.

Others have said that the *witness* mentioned in this verse is the Qur'an, or that it is the Angel Gabriel who recites the Qur'an to the Prophet. Perhaps this reading is derived from the verse, *But Allah bears witness to what He has sent down to you—He sent it down with His knowledge—and the angels bear witness* (4:166). Another suggestion is that the *witness* is an angel who aids the Prophet and helps him memorise the Qur'an, which might also be based on the aforementioned verse.

Still others have said that the *witness* is the Prophet himself, as God has said elsewhere, *O Prophet! Indeed We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and as a warner* (33:45). Yet another explanation is that

witness refers to the Prophet's tongue, meaning he recites the Qur'an with his own tongue.

Some commentators have said that the *witness* is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib on the basis of several traditions transmitted with this meaning from both Shīʿī and Sunnī sources.

However, when we examine the verse's context and reflect on its apparent meaning, it becomes clear that these alternate readings of the verse are not valid. Therefore, we will not extend the discussion by examining and debating them in greater detail.

And before him there was the Book of Moses, a guide and mercy: The pronoun '*him*' refers back either to '*he who*' in the previous verse or to the *manifest proof*, in the same vein as our discussion of the verb *follows*, above. This sentence is an adverbial clause following another adverbial clause. In other words, it means: 'Is there anyone endowed with divine insight to whom it is revealed that the Qur'an is the truth sent down by God, while it is the case that there is a witness of his own testifying to that on the basis of his own insight. It is also the case that this one, who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, was preceded by the Book of Moses, which was a guide and a mercy.' Alternatively, it could mean: '...before his manifest proof—which includes the Qur'an *or* is the Qur'an, which includes divine teachings and ordinances that guide people to the truth—there was the Book of Moses, which was a guide. Therefore, neither he nor the manifest proof he stands on is something new or unprecedented. On the contrary, he follows the well-trodden path of prophethood, which the Book of Moses guided people to before him.'

On this basis, it becomes clear why God describes the Book of Moses—the Torah—as a guide and a mercy, for it contains authentic teachings and divine ordinances for people to follow and from whose blessings they can benefit. God has repeated this description elsewhere in the Qur'an, in the verses: *Say, 'Tell me, if it is from Allah and you disbelieve in it, and a witness from the Children of Israel has testified to its like and believed, while you are disdainful?' Indeed Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot. The faithless say about the faithful, 'Had it been good, they would not have taken the lead over us toward it.' And since they could not find the way to it, they will say, 'It is an ancient lie.' Yet before it the Book of Moses was a guide and a mercy, and this is a Book which confirms it, in the Arabic language, to warn those*

who do wrong, and is a good news for the virtuous (46:10–12).

As you can see, these verses convey a similar message to the verse presently under discussion. They mention first that the Qur'an is a manifest proof from God, or that there is a manifest proof from God underlying it. Then, it mentions the testimony of a witness from the Children of Israel about it and his affirmation of it. Then, it mentions that the Qur'an was preceded, in terms of the knowledge and laws it includes, by the Book of Moses, which was a guide and a mercy, which people followed and were guided by. Therefore, this is a tried and tested path that the Prophet now follows, for the Qur'an is a scripture like the Book of Moses and a confirmation of it, which was revealed by God to warn the wrongdoers and give good news to the doers of good deeds.

From here, it also becomes clear that when He describes it as *a guide and a mercy*, this is an adverbial clause for the Book of Moses not for the phrase, *a witness of his own*, contrary to what some commentators have suggested.

It is they who have faith in it, and whoever denies it from among the factions, the Fire is their tryst: Based on the meaning of the beginning of the verse, '*it is they*' refers to those who stand on a *manifest proof* from their Lord, who are referred to by the clause, '*he who...*' As for the claim that '*it is they*' refers to the faithful because the context appears to indicate them, this is not a sound understanding of the text.

Therefore, the pronoun '*it*' in *a manifest proof from its Lord* should actually be read as a reference to the Qur'an given that it is a manifest proof from Him or something that is supported by a manifest proof from Him. As for saying that this refers to the Prophet—in which case, the translation would read: 'a manifest proof from his Lord'—this does not accord with what we have previously established about the meaning of the verse. After all, the beginning of the verse describes the condition of the Prophet insofar as it is a general principle that applies to this specific situation. It is for this reason that God draws the conclusion, *So do not be in doubt about it*, from it. This is as if to say: 'You are upon a manifest proof such as this, and there is a witness with you, and before you there was the Book of Moses, and whoever fits such a description should believe in what he has been given from the Book of God.' One cannot say that it means: 'And whoever fits this description should believe in you.' The discussion about the pronoun

'*it*' in the passage *whoever denies it from among the factions* is the same as the discussion about the pronoun in *it is they who have faith in it.*

The matter of the verse in terms of what its individual words and pronouns can suggest is astonishing, for different combinations of readings can potentially lead to thousands of possible interpretations, some of which are correct and some of which are evidently not.

So do not be in doubt **(marya)** ***about it; it is the truth from your Lord, but most people do not have faith:*** *Marya* is a type of doubt, and this statement is a conclusion drawn from the statements at the beginning of the verse. The meaning is: 'Whoever is upon a manifest proof from his Lord in a matter and has had a witness from himself to testify to it, and who had before him a guide and mercy like the Book of Moses, is not like the other people who are heedless and easily misled. This is because he believes in what he has of God's affair and is not alarmed by the majority of people turning away from what is in his possession. And you are in the same situation, for you are upon a manifest proof from your Lord, a witness follows you, and before you was the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy for mankind. If that is indeed the case, then do not be in doubt in the matter of what has been revealed to you of the Qur'an. It pure truth that has come from God, but most people do not believe.'

... it is the truth **(inna-hu al-ḥaqq)** ***from your Lord:*** This provides the rationale for the command, *do not be in doubt about it*. Note that it is emphasized through the use of the preposition *inna* and the definite article for *truth*, which indicates that there is an abundance of reasons to put one's doubts aside, namely the manifest proof, the testimony of the witness, and the precedent of the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

(11:18-19) *And who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah? They shall be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, 'It is these who lied against their*

Lord.' Look! The curse of Allah is upon the wrongdoers; those who bar from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked, and disbelieve in the Hereafter.

It is possible that this is a continuation of the previous passage, insofar as it seeks to reassure the Prophet, in which case the meaning is: 'Since you are on a clear proof from your Lord, you are not a wrongdoer, so far be it from you to be one who invents a lie about God! After all, there is no greater wrongdoer than he who invents a lie about God, and they shall suffer such-and-such a punishment for their lies!'

In any case, the meaning of 'fabricating lies about God' (*al-iftirā' al-kadhb ʿalā Allāh*) is to characterise Him with attributes that are not His, or to attribute something to Him falsely or without knowledge. Fabrication is one of the most conspicuous forms of wrongdoing and sinfulness. Furthermore, the severity of the wrongdoing depends on the importance of the one who has been wronged. Therefore, if the wrong is done to God, this is the greatest wrong of all.

This statement occurs in the context of an accusation levelled against the idolaters, as they used to accuse the Prophet of fabricating lies about God by attributing the Qur'an to Him. This verse turns their own accusations back against them by indicating that they were the ones who fabricated lies about God. They did by associating partners with Him without any knowledge, when He is the One God and there are no gods other than him. They fabricated lies against God when they barred others from following His way (see the following verse). This is because by barring others from the way of God, they implied that it was not, in fact, the way of God, which is itself fabrication. Then, when they sought another path and followed it in their lives, this was tantamount to altering God's path, which He had conveyed through human nature (*fiṭra*) and prophethood, this was also a fabrication against Him. Then, when they denied the Hereafter, this meant that they affirmed the Origin of all things but denied that they would return to God, which was tantamount to saying that He created the cosmos without any purpose, which is yet another form of fabricating lies against Him.

In sum, their adoption of a religion other than the one laid down by God and their adherence to it, their adoption of false beliefs about the Origin of all things and the Resurrection, and their following a path other

than God's in their worldly social lives—when nothing comes from God except the truth, and there is no path with God but the religion of truth—is fabrication against God. And witnesses will testify to this on the day they are presented before their Lord.

As for God's saying, *They shall be presented before their Lord ...*, to 'present' something is to show it so that it can be seen and examined. The veil between them and their Lord will be lifted on the Day of Judgement through the revelation of His signs and the manifestation of the clear truth without any distraction, and they will have no choice but to be present before Him for the Final Judgement. Therefore, God refers to this as being 'presented' (*'araḍ*) before Him. On other occasions, this has been called 'bringing out' (*burūz*), for example in the verses: *The day they will brought out, nothing about them will be hidden from Allah ...* (40:16); *... and they are brought out before Allah, the One, the All-paramount* (14:48). God says, *They shall be presented before their Lord ...*, meaning that the angels entrusted with them will bring them forth and place them in a situation where there is no barrier between them and their Lord, to receive their final judgment.

... and the witnesses (ashhād) ***will say, 'It is these who lied against their Lord':*** *Ashhād* is the plural of *shahīd* (witness), and it follows the same pattern of conjugation as *ashrāf* for *sharīf* (noble). Some have said it is in fact the plural of *shāhid* (with the same meaning), as *aṣḥāb* is the plural of *ṣāḥib* (companion). However, the first opinion is supported by the verses, *So how shall it be, when We bring from every nation a witness* (shahīd) *...?* (4:41), and *Then every soul will come accompanied by a driver and a witness* (shahīd) (50:21).

When the witnesses say, *It is these who lied against their Lord*, they are testifying to the fact that the idolaters invented lies against God. In other words, the testimony of these witnesses confirms that they are the fabricators, because this testimony is given in a venue where only the truth can be spoken and there is no escape from confessing to and acknowledging the facts of the matter. As God says elsewhere, *None shall speak except whom the All-beneficent permits and who says what is right* (78:38), and *The day when every soul will find present whatever good it has done; and as to whatever evil it has done it will wish there were a far distance between it and itself* (3:30).

The declaration, *Look! The curse of Allah is upon the wrongdoers*, is part

of the speech of the witnesses. The evidence for this reading is found in His saying, *Then a caller will announce in their midst, 'May Allah's curse be on the wrongdoers!' Those who bar from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked, and disbelieve in the Hereafter* (7:44–45).

This declaration by the witnesses, which God recounts in these verses, confirms that they are indeed far from God's mercy, cursed as oppressors, and sentenced to everlasting punishment. Note that God's curse and God's mercy on the Day of Judgement are not like His curse and His mercy in this world, as God says elsewhere, ... *they shall be cursed by Allah and cursed by the cursers* ... (2:159). This is because this world is an abode of action, while the Day of Judgement is the abode of recompense. Hence, when someone is cursed by God or receives His mercy on the Day of Judgement, this is nothing other than receiving what they have already earned in this world. Therefore, anyone who is cursed on the Day of Judgement will be forever banished from the special mercy that God has reserved for the truly faithful and sentenced to eternal punishment and estrangement from the Divine.

Then God clarifies who the oppressors are by saying of them, *those who bar from the way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked, and disbelieve in the Hereafter* (11:19). These are the ones who do not accept the reality of the Day of Reckoning and strive only for this life, following a path in life that brings them only worldly and material provision. They ignore what God wants from His servants, which is to follow the true faith and the religion of human nature. Therefore, whether they believe in a Creator but follow a distorted tradition that deviates from the religion of human nature, which is Islam, or they do not believe in Him at all and instead belong to those who say, *There is nothing but the life of this world: we live and we die, and nothing but time destroys* (45:24), they are wrongdoers and fabricators of lies against God. A discussion related to the meaning of these verses can be found in our commentary on Sūrah al-Aʿrāf, verses 44–45.[1]

From the discussion on the preceding verses, it is clear, first of all, that religion (*dīn*), in the language of the Qur'an, refers to the societal norms prevailing in a community. Second, these societal norms can either follow the correct and natural religion, which is Islam, or they can be a distorted version of the true religion, deviating from God's way.

1 See *al-Mīzān* Eng. v. 15 (Ed.)

أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۘ يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۚ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(11:20) *They cannot thwart on the earth, nor do they have besides Allah any guardian. For them the punishment shall be doubled, for they could neither listen, nor did they use to see.*

This refers to those who fabricate lies against God, who were described in the previous verses.

The context suggests that '*they cannot thwart on the earth*' means that they could not defy God during their earthly lives, when they deviated from the path of divine servanthood and began to invent lies about Him, obstructed His way, and sought to make it crooked. None of this is because their power exceeded God's, or because their will superseded His, nor because they escaped God's patronage to enter under the patronage of another—such as those they took as protectors from among their idols and other means they relied upon. This interpretation aligns with the phrase, *nor do they have besides Allah any guardian*.

In short, neither did their power exceed that of God, nor did their associates, whom they took as protectors for themselves, truly look after their affairs or compel them to perpetrate the wrongdoing and oppression they engaged in. Rather, it was God who was their protector. He was the one who managed their affairs. And He will recompense them for their evil intentions and deeds, drawing them towards the misery of everlasting punishment and leading them astray subtly, while they remain unaware. As God says elsewhere in the Qur'an, *So when they swerved, Allah made their hearts swerve* (61:5), and *Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors* (2:26).

For them the punishment shall be doubled: This means that their punishment will be intensified either because they acted rebelliously against God and persisted in this or because they disobeyed God themselves and encouraged others to disobey Him. Therefore, their punishment will be doubled, just as they doubled their disobedience. As God says, *that they may bear their entire burdens on the Day of Resurrection, along with some*

of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without any knowledge (16:25) and *We write what they have sent ahead and their effects* (36:12).

... for they could neither listen, nor did they use to see: This provides the reason for their actions. God declares that they did not disbelieve and disobey because their will overpowered God's will or because they had protectors other than God with whom to take refuge. Rather, they were unable to hear the warnings and glad tidings that came to them or take heed of the admonitions about the Resurrection. Nor could they comprehend His signs to believe in them. This is what God describes in the verse, *they have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, they have ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle; rather they are more astray* (7:179), and the verse, *We transform their hearts and their visions as they did not believe in it the first time* (6:110), and in the verse, *Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight* (2:7). There are many other verses besides these that indicate that He has deprived them of their minds, eyes, and ears.

However, in spite of this, God quotes some of the disbelievers as saying, *Had we listened or applied reason, we would not have been among inmates of the Blaze.' Thus they will admit their sin* (67:11). They admit that their failure to hear and ponder was a sin. However, their lack of hearing and comprehension is elsewhere attributed to God depriving them of these faculties. This shows that they caused themselves to be deprived of these blessings through their sinful behavior. This is what is indicated by the aforementioned verse, *Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors* (2:26), and others.

Commentators have offered alternative explanations of the statement, *for they could neither listen, nor did they use to see*.

One such explanation is that the phrase, *for they could neither ...*, is in the accusative case due to an implicit preposition attached to the phrase, *For them the punishment shall be doubled*. The full meaning of the passage reads: 'The punishment will be doubled for them because they were able to hear but they did not listen and because they were able to see but did not look.'

Another explanation is that the phrase, *for they could neither listen, nor did they use to see*, is in reference to their deities and idols. In which case,

the sentence can be construed as follows: 'Those disbelievers and their gods were not able to thwart on the earth...'—then God says of their idols—*for they could neither listen, nor did they use to see*.

Yet another explanation is that the phrase 'for they could neither...' (*mā kānū yastatī'ūn ...*) does not contain a negation but instead should be read as '...so long as they could listen and so long as they could see.' In other words, the punishment will be doubled for them so long as they are alive.

Finally, another explanation is the denial of hearing and seeing means denying the benefits of hearing and sight. It is because they were averse to hearing and contemplating God's verses and their hatred for that was that they acted as if they were unable to hear or see. In this case, the statement is metaphorical.

The most proper of these explanations is the last one. However, all of them are clearly absurd. The correct interpretation is the one we presented earlier.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

(11:21) *They are the ones who have ruined their souls, and what they used to fabricate has forsaken them.*

As for their loss, the human being, in truth, owns only his own soul—granted to him by God. If he trades his soul for what will lead to its ruin and wastes it through disbelief and sin, he has indeed suffered a loss in this transaction in which he has engaged. Hence, the loss of the soul is a metaphor for its ruin. As for being forsaken by what they fabricated: What they used to fabricate were lies, meaning false claims without any basis in reality. These sprang from their delusions and claims, which were made to seem decorous to them by their base desires and worldly ambitions. With the drawing back of the curtain of this worldly life, all of these illusions fade and vanish, and all of their lies and fabrications come apart. At that point, they will realize that God is the Manifest Truth, and from God will appear to them what they had not reckoned with.

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْأَخْسَرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

(11:22) *Undoubtedly* (lā jarama)*, they are the ones who will be the greatest losers in the Hereafter.*

According to al-Farrā', the original meaning of *lā jarama* is 'without escape' or 'without fail.' Over time, through its frequent use, it came to function as a kind of oath with the meaning of 'indeed' or 'truly.' Hence, the object of *lā jarama* can take the preposition *lām*, as in the statement, 'without fail, I will surely do such-and-such' (*lā jarama, laʿafʿalanna kadhā*). Some have said that when *lā jarama* is spelled with two *fatḥa*s, it means 'certainly.' It may have originally been used at the end of statements, in a similar way to *lā maḥāla* ('without fail'). This would have signified that the speaker was absolutely certain about their statement. Thus the meaning of the verse is: 'Truly, they will be the ones who are the greatest losers in the Hereafter.'

The reason they will be the greatest losers in the Hereafter—assuming they are the greatest losers compared even to other sinners—is because they lost their souls by ruining them and squandering their potential through denial and obstinacy. They have no hope of salvation from Hellfire in the Hereafter, just as there is no hope for their success and happiness in this world through faith so long as they persist in their stubbornness. God says, *Those who have ruined their souls will not have faith* (6:12). He also says about these people, whose hearing, sight, and hearts are sealed, *And We have put a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, then We have blind-folded them, so they do not see. It is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith* (36:9–10). He also spoke about the reason why they cannot believe, *Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god and whom Allah has led astray knowingly, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart, and put a blindfold on his sight? So who will guide him after Allah?* (45:23).

And if we suppose that they are the greatest losers with respect to the life of this world, it is on account of their disbelief in and rejection of God's path that they are deprived of the happiness of life, for which the true religion paves the way for them. Thus, they lose in this life just as they lose in the hereafter. However, they are at an even greater loss in the Hereafter due to its eternal and everlasting nature, while the life of this world is ephemeral and fleeting. God has said: *The day when they see what they are promised, as though they had remained only an hour of a day* (46:35).

In the hereafter, the consequences of one's actions are intensified and multiplied as stated by God, *But whoever has been blind in this world*

will be blind in the Hereafter and more astray from the right way (17:72). Therefore, it makes most sense to conclude that they are the greatest losers in the Hereafter, as this verse explicitly confines their loss to the hereafter without affirming their loss in this life.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(11:23) ***Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds and are humble before their Lord*** **(akhbatū ilā Rabbi-him)**—***they shall be the inhabitants of paradise, and they shall remain in it forever.***

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says:

> '*khabat* (from whence the verb *akhbata* is derived) signifies a firm piece of ground; in its literal sense, the verb *akhbata* means to seek out a firm piece of ground or to set down upon it. Then this verb came to be used figuratively for humility and mildness. The verses, *and are humble before their Lord* and *and give good news to the humble* (22:34) refer to those who are humble towards God and do not disdain His worship, while the verse, *and their hearts may be humbled before Him* (22:54), means that their hearts are meek and fearful towards Him.'

Therefore, when God describes them as *humble before their Lord*, this signifies their contentment with Him, such that the faith in their hearts remains steadfast, unwavering, and unmixed with doubt. This is in the same way as a firm piece of ground protects all that is planted in it. There is no basis for the reading that says *akhbatū ilā Rabbi-him* actually means *akhbatū li-Rabbi-him* (meaning, 'they are humble for the sake of their Lord'), because the meaning 'contentment' requires the preposition *ilā* rather than *li-*.

The fact that God has qualified faith and good deeds with humbling themselves to Him indicates that this refers to a specific group among the believers, rather than the believers as a whole. They are the ones who are content with God and possess insight from Him, as we have already discussed at the beginning of the verses when God says *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord* ... and so forth. The verses differentiate between two specific groups: those who are endowed with divine insight

and those who are spiritually blind.

Based on this, the flaw in the explanation offered by some commentators becomes clear. They claim that these seven verses beginning with *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord* ... to ... *Will you not then take admonition?* describe the condition of two groups: those who disbelieve in the Qur'an and those who believe in it.

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مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصَمِّ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ ۚ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(11:24) *The parable* (mathal) *of the two parties is that of one who is blind and deaf and one who sees and hears. Are they equal in comparison? Will you not then take admonition?*

A *mathal* is a representation, and it primarily serves to clarify abstract concepts to the listener using tangible or relatable examples. This allows the listener to understand and grasp these concepts. The two groups mentioned in the verse refer to those described in the previous verses, with the rest of the verse being clear.

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Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulayni transmits via his chain of narration from Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Khalāl, he said: I asked Abū al-Ḥasan about the verse of God Almighty: *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows?* (11:17) He said: The Commander of the Faithful is the witness from the Messenger of God, and the Messenger of God is the one who stands on clear evidence from his Lord.

(2) In his *Amālī*, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, transmits via his chain of narration from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kathīr, from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, from his father, from his grandfather ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, from al-Ḥasan, who said in a lengthy sermon he delivered in the presence of Muʿāwiya – among other things—: 'So events continued and time passed until God sent Muḥammad with prophethood, selected him for His message, and revealed His book to him and then commanded him to invite people to God. My father was the first to respond to the call of God and His messengers and the first

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to believe and affirm the truth of God and His Messenger. God Almighty has said in His book, revealed to His chosen Prophet: *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows?* The Messenger of God is the one who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and my father is the one who follows it, and he is a witness of his own.'

Author's comment: His speech is the best attestation to what we have presented in the interpretation of the verse, as by describing ʿAlī as the 'witness', he intends to apply the general meaning of the verse to this specific case.

(3) In *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, al-Ṣaffār narrates from al-Aṣbagh b. Nabāta that the Commander of the Faithful said: 'If I were to take the reigns of power, I would judge between the people of the Torah by their Torah, and the people of the Gospel by their Gospel, and the people of the Criterion by their Criterion with a judgment that ascends to God. By God, no verse was revealed in the Book of God, at night or during the day, except that I know about whom it was revealed, and there is no person whose head has been severed except that a verse has been revealed about him in the Book of God which will either lead him to Paradise or Hellfire.'

A man stood up and said to him: 'O Commander of the Faithful, what is the verse that was revealed about you? He said: 'Have you not heard God say: *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows...* ? The Messenger of God stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and I am the witness of his own who testifies for him.'

Author's comment: This meaning has also been has been narrated by Shaykh al-Mufīd in his *Amālī*, with a chain of narration, and in *Kashf al-Ghamma*, without a chain of narration, from ʿIbād b. ʿAbdallāh al-Asadī, from Imām ʿAlī. Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrated it without a chain of narration in his *Tafsīr* from Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh, from Imām ʿAlī. Similarly, Ibn Shahrāshūb narrates from al-Tabarī with his chain of narration from Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh, from Imām ʿAlī, and also from al-Asbagh, and from Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Imām al-Bāqir, and Imām al-Ṣādiq, from Imām ʿAlī.

(4) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Maʿrifa*, all of whom

narrate from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who said: 'There is no man from the Quraysh save that a portion of the Qur'an was revealed concerning him.' Then a man said to him: 'What was revealed about you?' He said: 'Do you not read Sūrah Hūd? *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows?* The Messenger of God, is upon clear evidence from his Lord, and I am a witness of his own.'

Author's comment: A similar tradition is also narrated in *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, from *Tafsīr al-Thaʿlabī*, via a chain of narration from al-Shaʿbī, who narrates with a gap from Imām ʿAlī. And also in the same source from Ibn al-Maghāzilī, via an incomplete chain from ʿIbād b. ʿAbdallāh, from Imām ʿAlī, a similar tradition. And likewise in *Kunūz al-Rumūz* by al-Rasʿanī, a similar tradition.

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Mardawayh via another chain, from ʿAlī, who said: 'The Messenger of God said: "*Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord*—that is me—*and whom a witness of his own follows?*—that is ʿAlī."'

Author's comment: A similar tradition is narrated in *Tafsīr al-Burhān* from Ibn al-Maghāzilī about the same verse, from the Prophet.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn al-Maghāzilī, via his chain of narration from ʿAlī b. Hābis who said: 'I and Abū Maryam entered upon ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAtā'. Abū Maryam said, "Tell us the narration you narrated to me from Abū Jaʿfar." He said, "I was sitting with Abū Jaʿfar when Ibn ʿAbdallāh b. Salām passed by. I said, "May I be your ransom, this is a son who has the knowledge of the Book," He said, "No, rather it is your companion ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—the one for whom verses from the Book of God, were revealed: *and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book* (13:43); *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows?* (11:17); and *Your guardian is only Allah, His Messenger, and the faithful* (5:55)."'

(7) It is narrated from Ibn Shahrāshūb, from Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nuʿaym, by three chains from Ibn ʿAbbās, who said: 'I heard ʿAlī say: "Concerning the verse, *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows...*: The Messenger of God stands on the manifest proof, and I am the witness."' (ibid.)

(8) It is narrated from Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad, who said: 'About the

verse, *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows …*, Ibn ʿAbbās said: "It is ʿAlī, bearing witness to the Prophet and he is of him."' (ibid.)

(9) And it is narrated from al-Thaʿlabī in his *Tafsīr*, via an incomplete chain to Ibn ʿAbbās: '*Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows…* specifically refers to ʿAlī.'

Author's comment: The author of *al-Manār* said, in the explanation of the verse when mentioning the meanings of '*a witness*': 'One explanation is that it refers to ʿAlī (r.a.). It is narrated by the Shīʿa and they interpret it as concerning the Imamate. It is narrated that he, may God ennoble his face, was asked about this, but he denied it and explained it as referring to the tongue of the Prophet. The opponents of the Shīʿa responded in kind and said that it refers to Abū Bakr. However, both of these are explanations influenced by personal opinion.' As for the author's claim that 'It is narrated by the Shīʿa', you can clearly see from what we have presented above that this is more widely narrated by Sunnī sources than Shīʿī ones. And, as for his claim that this is no different from saying it is a reference to Abū Bakr and that both are explanations influenced by personal opinion, you can refer back to our explanation of the verse to see that this does not fit with it.

(10) In al-Kāfi, al-Kulaynī relates via a chain of narration from Zayd al-Shaḥḥām, that he said to Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'We know a man called Kulayb who, whenever something comes from you, he says: "I submit." So we named him Kulayb of Submission!' The Imām invoked God's mercy upon him, then he said: 'Do you know what submission is?' We remained silent, so he said: It is, by God, humility. God has said, *those who have faith and do righteous deeds and are humble before their Lord* (11:23).'

Author's comment: A similar tradition is narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *Tafsīr*, and al-Kashshī, and likewise by al-Ṣaffār in *al-Basā'ir* from Abū Usāma Zayd al-Shaḥḥām, from him.

(Chapter 11 continues in English volume 20)

The end. All praise be to Almighty God.

About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imām, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī. ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

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1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others. [Pub.]

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers, particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Moseswī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Moses, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige

which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* [Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam.* The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

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